IMAGINING CORRUPT CONSUMPTION : THE GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE POX METAPHOR IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND (1494-1606)

William Henry Spates

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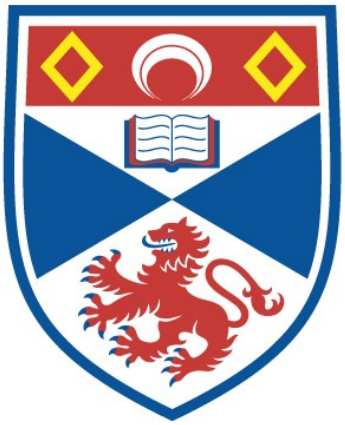

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to examine the birth and development of the pox metaphor in sixteenth-century English literature. In researching this literary history of a disease—of syphilis' life as an early modern metaphor—I have attempted to contextualize the pox metaphor's development within the social and economic constructs that led to the early modern conflation of excessive consumption with poxy corruption. This conflation freed the metaphor from the confines of discussion on disease and allowed early modern authors the freedom to apply pockifed tropes to describe various social ills and abuses. Initially these pox metaphors were restricted to sexualized subject matter such as inconstant women, but through the rise of satire, the metaphor became a means of describing London as rampant, diseased and corrupt. Finally, Shakespeare was able to take the pox and apply it to the economic sickness that was affecting England by inscribing appetites with consuming pox-inspired qualities that were, in effect, a commentary on the uncontrolled rise of the capitalist state and the dangers of desire.

I, William Henry Spates, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 98,547 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Contents

Figures

A Note on the Text

When using early modern sources, I have regularized early modern textual conventions such as the long –*s,* and consonantal *i* and *u* in accordance with modern usage. In citing Shakespeare, I have used Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's *The Complete Works,* except in the case of *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida* in which I have used the recent Cambridge editions.[1] While I agree with the argument eloquently put forward by Brian Vickers and supported by Oxford Shakespeare editors such as John Jowett that Shakespeare co-authored *Timon* with Thomas Middleton, I have chosen to use the recent Cambridge editions of *Timon* and *Troilus* for stylistic reasons.[2] The editors of the Oxford Shakespeare have removed Pandarus' epilogue in *Troilus* from the text and only used scene divisions in *Timon;* as a result, I have chosen to use the Cambridge editions to maintain a continuity of form. Any references to the Bible are from the King James Version, and digital copies of original texts from the Early English Books Online database are denoted by the abbreviation EEBO.

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works,* eds. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida,* ed. Anthony Dawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens.* Ed. Karl Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[2] Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *Timon of Athens.* ed. John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Introduction

Critical Imaginations

"When the poor innocent pox... is miserably, and most unconscionably slander'd:"

The Modern Deconstruction of an Ancient Metaphor

In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Ben Jonson appropriated some of the metaphorical force that syphilis had accumulated over the past century when he projected the shocking image of pockified destruction into the Jacobean argument that was raging over tobacco use in the early years of the sixteenth century. In his passionate plea, Justice Adam Overdo defends syphilis from what he views as an unjust accusation:

> Nay, the hole in the nose here, of some tobacco-takers, or
> The third nostril (if I may so call it), which makes that they
> Can vent the tobacco out like the ace of clubs, or rather the
> Flower-de-lys, is caused from the tobacco, the mere
> Tobacco! When the poor innocent pox, having nothing to
> Do there, is miserably, and most unconscionably slander'd.
> (*Bartholomew Fair,* 2.26.45-50)

Overdo pontificates with the verbosity of a man convinced of his own importance. He deals lightly with a horrible image: the ace of clubs or the fleur-de-lis that he describes is the gaping nothingness of a nose from which all the flesh and cartilage has decayed, leaving an open, black pit more at home on a death's-head than in the middle of an unfortunate victim's living face. However, Overdo—a target of Jonson's satirical scorn and a self-important fool—is attributing this symptom-image, which would have been immediately recognizable to any Jacobean theater-goer as characteristic of the ravages of syphilis, to the corrosive effect of tobacco smoke.

In this instance, Jonson's satire has a topical quality. In 1604, King James I had published "A Counterblaste to Tobacco" in which he denounced the current fashion of smoking in no uncertain terms. James found the habit to be "loathsome to the eye, hatefull to the nose, harmefull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the blacke stinking fume thereof, neerest resemnling the horrible Stigian smoake of the pit that is bottomless."[1] While many doubtlessly sympathized with James, tobacco was a fashionable diversion. Smoking was also commonly considered a prophylactic against syphilis. James also attempts to undermine this belief:

> For *Tobacco* being a common herbe, which (though under divers names) growes almost every where, was first found out by some of the barbarous *Indians,* to be a Preservative or Antidote against the Pocks, a filthy disease, whereunto these barbarous people are (as all men know) very much subject, what through the uncleanely and adust constitution of their bodies, and what through the intemperate heate of their Climate: so that as from them was first brought into Christendome, that most detestable disease, so from them likewise was brought this use of *Tobacco,* as a stinking and unfavourite Antidote, for so corrupted and execrable a maladie, the stinking suffumigation whereof they use against that disease, making so one canker or venime to eate out another.[2]

It appears then that it was James, rather than Jonson, who had first appropriated syphilis' destructive powers to argue against tobacco use. For James, tobacco was merely one type of venom and the pox another, and to make his argument more effective, he ascribed the horrors of syphilis to tobacco use. Tobacco, like a canker, eats away the poison of the pox. It is this image that Jonson found fault with: the conflation of tobacco smoke and syphilitic destruction.[3]

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[1] James Stuart, "A Counterblaste to Tobacco," *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James* (London, 1616), 222.
[2] James, 214.
[3] Quite by chance, James was right. Malignant cancers resulting from carcinogens, such as smoke, can pox-like consume flesh, cartilage and bone.

Jonson was renowned for his cantankerous nature, and it is very possible that he was satirizing James I. In 1619, he had boasted to William Drummond of Hawthornden that: "he heth a minde to be a churchman, and so he might have favour to make one sermon to the King, he careth not what therafter sould befall him: for he would not flatter though he saw Death."[4] Jonson was, at the time, middle-aged, corpulent and given to gluttony and excesses of drink. He was the type of man who might have been predisposed to take some tobacco at the Mermaid; he was the type of man who would have known what a rotten nose really signified. This same man became the tutor of Wat Raleigh and accompanied him to Paris and passed out from drunkenness. In a fit of Rabelaisian inspiration, the young Raleigh carted his tutor through the streets as the mountainous, fleshy, slumbering centerpiece of a Bakhtinian-grotesque, Carnival procession:

> S. W. Raulighe sent him Governour with his son, anno 1613, to France. This youth being knavishly inclined, among other pastimes (as the setting of the favor of damosells on a cod-piece), caused him to be drunken, and dead drunk, so that he knew not wher he was, thereafter laid him on a carr, which made to be drawen by pioneers through the streets, at every corner showing his Governour stretched out, and telling them, that was a more lively image of the Crucifx then any they had: at which sporte young raughlies mother delighted much (saying, his father young was so inclined), though the father abhorred it.[5]

According to Edmund Howes, Sir Walter Raleigh "first brought Tobacco in use" making the herb popular amongst London's fops, gulls and dandies.[6] It was James that decided the elder Raleigh's doom. Perhaps Walter Raleigh and Jonson's shared

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[4] William Drummond, *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden,* ed. R. F. Patterson (London: Blackie and Son, 1923), 29.
[5] Drummond, 27-28.
[6] Edmund Howes, *Anneles or A Generall Chronicle of England Began by John Stowe* (London, 1631), MMMM2^{v}. Raleigh may have popularized tobacco useage, but recent scholars argue that John Hawkins introduced tobacco to England in 1567. See Liza Picard, *Elizabeth's London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), 110.

Catholic history recommended Jonson for that position to which he proved most unequal—as young Raleigh's tutor, and perhaps then Jonson's pockified mockery was directed toward the king, either in a show of solidarity with Sir Walter Raleigh in hopes of reward or out of vengeance for his friend.

Whores, Villains, Fools and Anti-Heroes

Jonson's inclusion of poxy satire was normal, even conventional, by the literary standards of the day. Early modern writers often found syphilis and its symptoms apt signifiers for sin, and literature of the period teems with references to, and images of, the disease. Shakespeare imbued Doll Tearsheet, Falstaff, Jacques, Parolles, Pandarus, Mark Antony, Mistress Quickly and Nell with syphilis, while a number of other characters, like Timon and Thersites, used pockified language.[7] Just in reference to the poxy destruction of noses, one can begin to see how syphilis was part of an important literary metaphor in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean works by taking a look at Shakespeare's plays. Syphilis-decayed noses appear in at least five plays that Shakespeare produced across the span of his career. Gordon Williams argued that Nell's nose in *The Comedy of Errors* "all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain" (3.02.136-139) suggests not the nose of an alcoholic but one attacked with syphilitic buboes—an argument that has also been applied to Bardolph's ornamented nose in *Henry V*.[8] Similarly, Greg Bentley argued that the line "Helen's golden tongue has commended Troilus for a copper nose (*Troilus and Cressida,* 1.2.101-1.2.102)" presents the image of a syphilitic's red, pustule-ridden nose, or a real copper or silver

[7] In the course of the thesis, I will discuss the pox in relation to all of these characters.
[8] Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare, Sex and the Print Revolution* (London: Athlone, 1996), 137-138.

nose used as a replacement for the syphilis-rotted original.[9] The Clown in *Othello* asks the musicians, "Why masters, ha' your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i'th' nose thus?" (3.1.3-4). The Clown combines the early modern belief that the disease originated at the siege of Naples with syphilis attacking the nose and affecting the voice. Finally he adds the instrument quibble: it is not the musicians' musical instruments but their sexual instruments that caused them to speak in their nose. Finally, Timon, in his injunction to Timandra and Phrynia, envisions the destruction of the bridge of a nose in a quibble derived from a militaristic assault on a bridge: "Down with the nose, down with it flat, take the bridge quite away" (*Timon* 4.3.156-157).[10]

Poxy Popularity

By the time Jonson's Overdo projected poxy-ravages onto smoking, syphilis, also known during early modern age as "the New Disease," was no longer newsworthy. Across the span of the sixteenth century, syphilis was apparently diminishing as a medical concern while simultaneously developing into a potent literary metaphor that infected several late Elizabethan and Jacobean works. I

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[9] Greg W. Bentley, *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in "Troilus and Cressida," "Measure for Measure," and "Timon of Athens"* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 67.

[10] Thomas Middleton, who co-authored *Timon* with Shakespeare, uses a similar military metaphor for syphilitic decay of the nose in *Women Beware Women.* Ward, a young heir, admiring Isabella's (his soon-to-be wife) nose, says "I have known as good as that, that has not lasted a year, though" (3.3.70-73). To this, his servant, Sordido responds:

> That's I the using of a thing; will not any strong bridge fall down in time, if we do nothing but beat at the bottom? A nose of buff would not last always, sir, especially if it came into th' camp once (3.3.71-73).

In response to Ward's fears that Isabella nose will fall to syphilis, Sordido argues that it all depends on how a thing is used. Sordido's thing could be nonspecific, or more likely, a reference to Isabella's genitalia—or in other words, Isabella as a sexual object. If she is "used" promiscuously, or uses herself promiscuously, her nose may not last a year. Sordido argues further with a sexual/bridge assault image: that it does not matter the quality of the bridge or nose, if it is beaten below (another sexual quibble), it will fall. Sordido finishes the image with a final military metaphor saying even a nose of buff, or armor made with hardened leather, will not last long in places such as military camps. Thomas Middleton, *Five Plays,* Eds. Brian Loughery and Neil Taylor (London: Penguin, 1988).

propose that syphilis lends itself to a framework of metaphorical understanding vital to the early modern expression of the dominant conceptual and discursive form of the body-centered episteme as propounded by Jonathan Gil Harris.[11] The body-centered episteme is Harris' recent conceptualization of the body politic, or "the analogy between society and the human body," which according to David George Hale, "is used more than any of the correspondences which compose the 'Elizabethan world picture.'"[12] Hale's description is of course based on *The Elizabethan World Picture* in which E. M. W. Tillyard attributed Elizabethan conceptions of the body to Pythagorean philosophy which held that "man's very anatomy corresponded with the physical ordering of the universe. His frame was compounded of the four elements, and on the same principles as was the sublunary world."[13] The image of the body politic can also be reversed and human bodies can be politicized. The body politic is also a politic body—a theory illustrated by Ian Frederick Moulton's examination of a seventeenth-century female object of male desire who is "constructed as a landscape—topological space to be surveyed, explored, cultivated and dwelt in. The metaphorical equivalence of the female body and landscape is a common trope in early modern English poetry."[14] Both the body politic and the politicized body are discursive conceptions of the body-centered episteme, and in this framework, the pox is a vital means of expressing ideas on consumption and corruption.

Since the 1990s, critics have begun to see the importance of syphilis and its metaphors within the early modern construct in which the body was the primary conceptual model for understanding the world. This importance, although long ignored, should not be underestimated: an empirical indication of early modern

[11] See Jonathan Gill Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 141.
[12] David George Hale, *The Body Politic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 11.
[13] E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; London: Penguin Books, 1990), 76.
[14] Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.

English interest in the pox is inadvertently advertised by F. D. Hoeniger when he writes that John Caius' *Boke or Counseill against the Disease called the Sweate* (1552) "is the only sixteenth-century book in English literature devoted to an illness other than the plague or syphilis."[15] Like leprosy and the plague, syphilis greatly concerned early modern people; furthermore, in this world which defined itself in terms of the body, syphilis would far outstrip other diseases as a metaphorical force.

For most of the history of literary criticism, the politics of decorum have shaped critical discourse on the pox. In the first chapter, I will discuss several critics who, from the nineteenth century onwards, have lent their hand to describing the role of syphilis in early modern literature. Starting with John Bucknill in 1860, medical doctors began identifying syphilis references, primarily in the works of Shakespeare.[16] Through the nineteenth century and by-and-large until the late 1960s, syphilis in literature was largely a subject discussed by doctors with an interest in literature and history, and until the late 1980s, the literary critics, as well as the doctors and historians, who dared break the silence surrounding the early modern fascination with syphilis, contented themselves with describing the presence of syphilis and identifying poxy terms.

Since the 1990s, however, a growing number of scholars have addressed the importance of the pox in early modern literature. Much of this criticism may have inadvertently been in response to the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic, which forced both scholars and society in general, to once again confront

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[15] F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 38. Mary Dobson, the medical historian, suggests that sexually transmitted disease held a privileged position. Dobson has compiled a table which ranks the extent to which early modern south-east Englanders feared illnesses: sexually transmitted disease is ranked third out of twelve negative classifications at "loathing" in a range between "terror" and "irritation." Mary J. Dobson, Contours *of Death and Disease in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 489.

[16] John Bucknill, *The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare* (1860; New York: AMS Press, 1971).

the cultural connotations of a morally-loaded disease.[17] While several notable critics, like Michael Schoenfeldt, Margaret Healy and Jonathan Gil Harris, have produced astute and informative pox readings, there is much to be accomplished in a more detailed exploration of the formation and evolution of syphilis as a literary/metaphorical presence.

The pox presents a literary scholar with the unusual opportunity to trace the creation and development of a major metaphor. Early moderns generally believed that syphilis was a product of the New World brought back to Europe by Columbus' crew on his first voyage. This belief first appeared in print in the early 1500s, and the debate continues until this day.[18] In this thesis, I am not interested in debating the

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[17] AIDS certainly caused Susan Sontag to think further on the role of disease as metaphor. In 1991, she added *AIDS as Metaphor* as a further response to her essay "Illness as Metaphor." See Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1991). See also, Christopher Whitty's essay comparing social responses to Renaissance syphilis and modern AIDS. Christopher J. M. Whitty, "Erasmus, Syphilis and the Abuse of Stigma," *The Lancet* 354 (1999), 2147-2148.

[18] In the modern discussion of the origin of pox there are two camps: the first supports a belief in the Columbian exchange—that syphilis came from the New World—while the second argues that the pox has pre-Columbian European origins. Syphilis leaves tell-tale markings on bones; however, paleopathologists have collected only a slender amount of physical evidence indicating that syphilis existed in the Europe before Columbus' contact with the New World. Nevertheless, syphilis, an infection caused by the *Treponema pallidum* bacteria, has an ancient lineage (syphilis–damaged Neanderthal bones have been excavated), while yaws, a non-venereal but genetically identical ailment is indigenous to tropical areas around the world. It is probable that syphilis did exist in Europe since ancient times; however, it is also likely that an especially virulent mutation of the disease was ravaging the Old World in the last years of the fifteenth century. At this time, wherever syphilis appeared in Europe and Asia it was viewed as a new disease. According to Oriel, after Italy, the pox appeared in France, Germany and Switzerland in 1495; England and Scotland in 1497; India in 1498 and China in 1505 (Oriel, 11). Early modern observations on the newness of the pox are supported by later European exploration, which introduced syphilis to seemingly new populations:

> The same sequence of events was seen when transoceanic exploration by Europeans introduced syphilis into localities such as Japan, Malaysia and Polynesia where it had been previously unknown. The resulting outbreaks of infection were severe, with widespread pustular eruptions and ulcerated mucus membranes, resembling those which had occurred in Europe in the late fifteenth century. Later the disease became less florid as it subsided into a chronic endemic state. Similar phenomena have been recorded for many other infectious diseases introduced into "virgin" populations. (Oriel, 16)

Since the disease was said to be new everywhere, one has to suspect that, even if syphilis had been around, this must have been a new strain. Adherents to the mutation theory believe that:

> Syphilis was present in Europe prior to 1492, but in a relatively mild form. This brings up the intriguing question of whether two treponemal diseases—one European and one American—fused to become the epidemic disease that burst spectacularly upon Europe

pathogenic origin of the disease—what is important to the work is that most early modern writers regarded the disease as new. Similarly, I am not so much interested in the medical and biological specificities of syphilis as I am with the pox metaphor—the conceptual entity of syphilis as it existed in early modern literature. It is in this role that pox becomes an invaluable key to understanding fundamental Renaissance conceptions and expressions of corporeal and societal bodies.

The earliest pox writings are concerned with education. Most of the works are informative in nature: they describe the disease, its symptoms and its purported cures. In this process, early modern authors began to contextualize the pox within the larger context of European culture. Much of this is done first by naming the disease and then by creating stories about the origin of the disease. In this process, the pox metaphor begins to form. At a very early stage, people recognized the venereal nature of the disease. The sexual-moral implications of the pox, combined with symptoms often associated with leprosy, caused authors to appropriate biblical associations of uncleanliness and sin from leprosy and attribute them to the pox.[19] The act of imagining the pox-as-sin, as moral condemnation and as a punishment from God thrived throughout the history of the metaphor. Authors were quick to grasp this

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at about the time that Christopher Columbus returned from his first voyage to the New World.

See Stephen V. Beck, "Syphilis: The Great Pox," *Plague, Pox and Pestilence,* ed. Kenneth F. Kiple (London: Orion, 1999), 111. The mutation theory calls this virulent strain "malignant syphilis," and describes it as a disease "with a short course, severe symptoms and signs and often a fatal outcome" (Oriel, 15). Early modern texts provide support the malignant syphilis theory. Early modern authors recognize that, during the first half of the sixteenth century, the pox's virulence was abating and new symptoms, such as alopecia were appearing (Eatough 14). Pietro Bembo, to whom Fracastoro dedicated *Syphilis,* claims that "for several years it [syphilis] raged out of control, destroyed a large number of men and defiled the great majority [...] its severity now relenting and becoming more tolerable." See Pietro Bembo, "The History of Venice," *Syphilis,* ed. and trans. Eatough, 211. For the purposes of this thesis, the origin of the disease and the discussion of its ancient presence in Europe are not as important as the fact that in early sixteenth century Europe almost every "writer regarded it [syphilis] as a terrifying new disease for which there was no cure" (Eatough, 13).

[19] Leprosy was at this time a rarity in Europe. Syphilis came to serve as the physical example of the leprosy-as-sin-and-uncleanliness metaphor that appears frequently in the Bible. For a discussion on the incidence of leprosy in Medieval Europe, see Peter Richards, *The Medieval Leper* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1978).

association and applied it with devastating effect to invective and satire. The greatest authors of the first half of the sixteenth century, Erasmus and Rabelais among them, deployed syphilis in moral or educational messages. At the same time, syphilis was becoming the Protestant paradigm for sin, filth and the lecherous depravity of the Catholic Church and its clergymen.

By the 1560s, syphilis, as a simple theological or satirical bludgeon, seems to have exhausted itself. While the pox continued to appear in print, primarily in medical tracts, it ceased to be a large part of the literary discussion. This may be the result of the new disease no longer being new—its shock value had begun to diminish—however, the 1590s brought a surprising new life to the metaphor. Early professional authors like the University Wits revitalized the metaphor and vastly broadened its satirical powers by applying it to discussions on subjects ranging from fashion to the economy. The poxy body became a metaphor for various ills and abuses that afflicted individual psyches and the commonwealth at large. More importantly, through this process, syphilis developed into the correlative image for the many expressions of excessive and diseased consumption that preoccupied early modern writers whose England was being transformed by the stirrings of capitalistic fervor. As the sixteenth century came to a close and the seventeenth century began, the pox became a paradigm of corrupt consumption quite removed from the actualities of the disease. Authors use this imagined pox to inscribe the social issues of their day with images of illicit sexuality, excess, consumption, disease and death.

Chapter 1

The Critical Background

The majority of pox criticism can be broadly divided into two distinct approaches: the medical and the literary. The first began in the mid-nineteenth century and involved medical doctors writing primarily about the pox in Shakespeare. Many of these early critics enjoyed exploring the wealth of medical knowledge encapsulated within Shakespeare's texts, and they wrote as doctors talking about syphilis, as a disease, in Shakespearean literature. In the early-to-mid-twentieth century, medically-inspired pox criticism broadened as specialists from medical historians to paleopathologists entered the discussion, and the great debate on the origin of syphilis which had first begun in the early sixteenth century was reignited.[1] The pox entered literary criticism in the late 1960s, when critics began to discuss the role of syphilis in literature. For some time this grouping was somewhat artificial because from the 1960s until the 1990s literary critics continued in the fashion of their earlier medical commentators in that they mined early modern texts for instances of syphilis; they discussed the origin of the disease and they conjectured—most often on text-based evidence—as to which authors and notable persons had the pox, rather than looking at how the disease functioned in the text. More serious pox criticism appeared in the 1990s. As authors such as Jonathan Sawday, Gail Paster, Margaret Healy and Jonathan Gil Harris began to focus on the body as an early modern philosophical construct—a space of both discussion and understanding—body-

[1] For an example of a paleopathologist's approach to medical history and syphilis see Calvin Wells, *Bones, Bodies and Disease: Evidence of Abnormality in Early Man* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964).

centered images, such as the pox, began to be explored as signifiers of more than historical instances of disease.

The Victorian Doctor-Critics and Shakespeare the Syphilographer

> Now what I want is, Facts... Facts alone are wanted in life... Stick to the facts, sir!... In this life, we want nothing but facts, sir; nothing but facts![2]

On the seventeenth of June 1912, the Royal Society of Medicine's president, Sir Henry Morris, inaugurated a discussion on syphilis. By the third page of his introductory remarks, the literary nature of Morris' medical address became apparent. At this point, Morris invoked Shakespeare: "the word pox reminds us of the frequent use Shakespeare made of it."[3] Morris used Shakespeare's texts to ground his discussion of the pathological incidence of the disease within a cultural and historical background. Morris' statement says much about the cultural ascendancy of Shakespeare. Morris knew a great deal about Shakespeare's medical references, and from his address, one can gather that he expected that his colleagues were equally well-versed in the Bard's work. For example, Morris found pox references in fifteen of Shakespeare's plays, and he paid particularly close attention to Timon who, he said, speaks "in language that shows a considerable knowledge of the characteristics of secondary and tertiary syphilis."[4] Morris corroborated Shakespeare's references by acknowledging that Ben Jonson referred to syphilis in plays such as *Every Man in his*

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[2] This line is spoken by Charles Dickens' Thomas Gradgrind; however, Gary Taylor appropriated it when he discussed the Victorian critical penchant for applying a scientific approach to literary criticism. Lane's syphilitic imaginings are, of course, an example of this phenomenon. Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*, (London: The Hogarth University Press, 1989), 166.

[3] Sir Henry Morris, *The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1912,* vol. 5 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 24.

[4] Morris was referring to Timon's extensive pockified diatribe in 4.3. Morris, 26. Incidentally, Aubrey Kail made the very same observation in *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare* more than seventy years later. Aubrey Kail, *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare* (Balgowlah, New South Wales: Williams and Wilkins, 1986), 84-86.

Humor. Furthermore, he identified the same syphilitic language in Colly Cibber's *The Careless Husband.* Morris cited Jonson and Cibber's works as evidence of continuity in the usage—and by implication, in the general understanding—of pox references for at least a century.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century medical professionals' fascination with the pox in Shakespeare's writing complemented their contemporaries' silence in literary criticism. In this instance, the medical professionals' approach to Shakespeare's syphilitic writings was the exact opposite to nineteenth and early-twentieth century literary critics. Medical writers' like Morris invoked Shakespeare's poxy references to justify writing about a taboo subject which they addressed in their professional lives—venereal disease—while literary scholars of the period went to great pains to ignore or even expurgate unseemly Shakespearean topics. In the early twentieth century, Sir D'Arcy Power, writing in the *British Journal of Venereal Diseases,* identified pox references in literature well into the eighteenth century. He recognized that as opposed to early modern pox writing and the more recent exception of writers such as Henrik Ibsen, "the whole subject of venereal disease had become *tabu*, during the Victorian period, and for many years there was a conspiracy of silence."[5] The doctors who practiced literary criticism operated somewhat outside of this Victorian taboo—in that those who worked with venereal disease were forced to discover a more pragmatic approach to the shame of the sufferers. However, I suspect that working with victims of venereal disease would have also made them shameful by association. As a result, these doctors turned to Shakespeare's poxy texts, not only out of professional interest, but also to bolster their

[5] Sir D'Arcy Power, "Clap and Pox in English Literature," *British Journal of Venereal Disease,* 113. It would have been more correct if Power had said that the pox ceased to appear in recent English literature. For example, there were several French symbolists, including Charles Baudelaire, who write extensively about the pox.

social standing by borrowing from Shakespeare's cultural prestige. Literary critics who already had the cultural prestige of being Shakespearean scholars seem to have avoided those early modern topics that appeared less virtuous to Victorian society: namely the carnivalesque and grotesque elements of sexuality, excretion and drunkenness. As a result the same social forces of conformity and the desire for approbation that drove the Victorian doctor critics to write about the pox silenced mainstream literary scholars' discussion on the same subject.

You are what you Write

Morris' high tone was not sustained throughout the society's summer syphilis sessions. Ernest Lane resorted to what is one of the most common styles of syphilis commentary: the literary accusation in which the critic poxes the author by suggesting that the appearance of syphilis in the text is proof that the author was diseased. Morris had confined his comments to noticing and illuminating references to the pox in the works of Shakespeare supported by observations garnered from Jonson and Cibber's texts; he had looked at pockified texts as a source of historical observations on the disease. Lane assumed the role of a Freudian detective trying to make a medical diagnosis on the basis of Shakespeare's fiction. He began with what he perceived as Shakespeare's intense dislike of women:

> And there arises an interesting problem with regard to Shakespeare himself. *Timon of Athens*, in which we find such an accurate and poignant picture of the effects of syphilis, was a late play (1608), as was *King Lear* in which occurs the terrible description of the female sexual organs (4.6.130 *et sqq.*). Both plays seem written by a bitter misogynist.[6]

[6] Ernest J. Lane, *The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1912,* vol. 5, (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 97.

Lane attempted to ascertain the poet's character through the nature of his work. It is his belief that Shakespeare's misogynistic and pockified corpus betrayed the secret of a poxy corporeality. Once Lane apprehended that Shakespeare was giving voice to his own misogynistic convictions through characters such as Thersites, he was determined to discover why:

> We know that Shakespeare before he wrote them [*Timon* and *Lear*] passed through a period of grave mental and probably physical trial; we know also from his own statements in the Sonnets that some scandal was attached to his name. No one has offered a satisfactory explanation of these facts. I venture to suggest that it may be found in Shakespeare himself having suffered from syphilis.[7]

With great facility, Lane leapt from Shakespeare's numerous syphilitic and misogynistic references, to the source, which was to him immediately apparent: Shakespeare was a syphilitic! Lane continued his argument, leaving his textual evidence in favor of conjecture based on Restoration rumors:

> The poet often stayed at the Crown Hotel in Oxford; here on March 3, 1605, he stood godfather to the future Sir William Davenant, the son of the innkeeper's wife. It was rumored that Shakespeare really was the father of Sir William Davenant, who used in later life to boast of this parentage. It is a strange fact that the portraits of Sir William Davenant are strongly suggestive of inherited syphilis in their physiognomy.[8]

With this proof, Lane concluded his argument. He transferred syphilis from Shakespeare's texts to his person. According to Lane's argument, Shakespeare engendered syphilitic texts and centuries later, the diseased texts become the infective vector—the agent which infected the author.

Lane and Morris' writings provide examples of the two oldest forms of poxy literary criticism. Theirs is a form of literary criticism that is disguised within

[7] Lane, 97.
[8] Lane, 97.

medical texts: a practice that began in the nineteenth century and continues to appear in medical journals such as *The Lancet.*[9] Doctor-critics, such as Morris, who wished to examine diseases, such as syphilis, in a historical context would most often turn to the logical source: medical texts. There are no shortages of early modern medical texts, which addressed syphilis and its treatments, by eminent doctors. For reasons of cultural currency, however, Shakespeare's literary observations were, and perhaps still are, revered as fact rather than fiction. Morris himself bolsters Shakespeare's syphilis observations with those of "that fine old surgeon Richard Wiseman, Serjeant-Chirurgeon to King Charles II."[10] Shakespeare's observations are seen as equally valid if not superior to those of the regent's physician—a post which would indicate a formidable medical authority. As a result, the esteem with which the English-speaking world holds Shakespeare had made him a most valuable witness of early modern medical knowledge.

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[9] A recent example of poxy, medico-literary criticism is "A Note on a Phrase in Shakespeare's Play *King Lear:* 'A Plague upon your Epileptic Visage.'" T. and H. Betts, *Seizure* 7 (5) 1988, 407-409. T. and H. Betts find in Kent's curse that "'epileptic' [...] is actually a reference to the pock-marks of syphilis, endemic in Elizabethan England;" it is also held to be "the first appearance of the word in the English language (as quoted in the *OED*)" T. and H. Betts, 407. According to the Betts, the first English reference to epilepsy actually refers to the pox. Their basis for this assumption is that epilepsy does not mark the victims' physiognomy in a characteristic manner. In support, they have cited the pockified nature of *King Lear*:

> There are several other syphilitic references in *King Lear* itself (e.g. the symbolism of Gloucester's blindness) and a savage misogyny (for example Lear's description of female genitalia as "burning" and "the sulphur pit"). "A plague upon your epileptic visage" is probably a reference to syphilis because in the next lines a direct allusion is made to syphilis and its pock-marks. (Betts, 408).

It seems more than likely that the argument is sound. Epilepsy was a new or recent word that already was employed to describe the congenital disease that Shakespeare most often called the falling sickness. Some of the Betts' supporting evidence is rather slim—once again, misogyny is used to suggest syphilis. Lear's dismal view of the female sexual organs is more in line with dominant images of syphilis and sexually transmitted disease. The outcome of the Betts argument is, however, incidental. For the purpose of this thesis, it stands only as an example of the continued connection between the pox, medicine and literary criticism.

[10] Morris, 22

The First Pockified Instances of Literary Criticism

The pox entered literary criticism with Beryl Rowland's "The 'Seiknes Incurabill' in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid,*" which appeared in *Notes and Queries* in 1963.[11] The article never progressed beyond Rowland's identification of Cresseid's illness as possibly being syphilis rather than leprosy. Rowland's argument was convincingly challenged five years later in Katherine Hume's article, "Leprosy or Syphilis in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*?"[12] Hume addressed the medico-historical argument on the origin of the pox by arguing that *Cresseid* was written between 1470 and 1492—a period when syphilis was either not recognized as a separate disease or perhaps did not even exist in Europe at that time. Neither article did more than recognize or discount the presence of the pox in *Testament.* Rowland and Hume are therefore engaged in a medical discussion—diagnosing a disease presented in literature—rather than discussing the literature itself. It is important to note that there was a very similar contemporary article by Ellis Herndon Hudson in the *British Journal of Venereal Disease* entitled "Diagnosing a Case of Venereal Disease in Fifteenth-Century Scotland." Hudson also examined *Cresseid,* but unlike Hume, found an "undoubted case of sexually acquired syphilis."[13] Since *Cresseid* predated Columbus' first trip to the New World, Hudson cited Cresseid's infection as evidence that syphilis was not brought from the Americas, thus taking the opposite side of the medical historical argument but adding very little to a reading of the text.

Good examples of pockified readings of English Renaissance texts did not appear until Gordon Williams' articles, "A Sample of Elizabethan Sexual Periphrasis"

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[11] Beryl Rowland, "The 'Seiknes Incurabill' in Henryson's *Testament of Cressid,*" *English Language Notes* 1.3 (1963), 175-76.
[12] Kathryn Hume, "Leprosy or Syphilis in Henryson's *Testament of Cressid*?," *English Language Notes*, 6.4 (1969), 242-45.
[13] Ellis Herndon Hudson, "Diagnosing a Case of Venereal Disease in Fifteenth Century Scotland," *British Journal of Venereal Disease* 48 (1972), 153.

(1968) and "An Elizabethan Disease" (1971).[14] In "Sexual Periphrasis," Williams focused on misogynistic passages from a variety of Renaissance texts, and he related Renaissance misogyny to syphilis. Later, in "Elizabethan Disease," he identified the linguistic adaptations of pox usage in describing victims of different classes in the hierarchic society of early modern England. The pox was only for the poor; the wealthy often called syphilis by other names, such as sciatica or gout. He also touched upon various pox references, plastic surgery and metal noses, and he argued that syphilis did not abate in the seventeenth century as many had argued. Williams' early articles remain excellent sources, and perhaps more importantly, they prefigured an interest in sexuality and disease that is realized in his recent works: *Shakespeare, Sex and the Print Revolution* (1996) and *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (1997).

The next article to appear after Williams' "Sexual Periphrasis," was Nicholas Jacobs' "Saffron and Syphilis: *All's Well that Ends Well* IV.v. 1-3."[15] Jacobs identified the reference to saffron in *All's Well* as an element of certain syphilis cures. He argued that Lafeau's line to the Countess about Parolles, "no no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta fellow, there whose villainous saffron would have made all the unbak'd and doughy youth of a nation in his color" (4.5.1-5), reveals a "culinary metaphor for the corruption of the young [that] would carry additional overtones of physical infection."[16] Jacobs' identification of the pox is a good example of early poxy literary criticism. However, Jacobs could have taken his point a bit further. While identifying the pox as a metaphor for the corruption of youth he does not associate the poxing of Parolles as a blazon of lecherous sin, nor does he recognize

[14] Gordon Williams, "A Sample of Elizabethan Sexual Periphrasis," *Trivium* 3 (1968), 94-101, and Gordon Williams, "An Elizabethan Disease," *Trivium* 6 (1971), 43-58.
[15] Nicholas Jacobs, "Saffron and Syphilis: *All's Well that Ends Well* IV.v. 1-3," *Notes and Queries* 22.4 (1975), 171-172.
[16] Jacobs, 173.

that the pox continues to play a role in Lafeau's attacks on Parolles' scurvy nature, such as in his insult, "Let they curtsies alone, they are scurvy ones" (5.3.324).[17] Lafeau's mockery is twofold: he attacks Parolles' curtsies as scurvy, meaning that they are poorly executed and that they are also poxed. The deformed gait of a syphilitic was often used in early modern quibbles which conflated the scabbed, crabbed or crinkled walk of a syphilitic suffering from poxy pain in the joints with the parasitic servility of French and Francophile English humorists.[18] Lafeau's dismissal of Parolles, is an overtly pockifed reflection of Henry V's dismissal of Falstaff. Like Falstaff, Parolles' is dangerous to the commonwealth, but while Falstaff's pox is an incidental element of his crimes against the body politic, Parolles' pox threatens to infect the youth of the nation. This repeated association of Parolles' poxy infectiousness, and the association with Falstaff's similar detrimental effect on the commonwealth, deserves to be more fully explored.

While works like "Saffron and Syphilis" began to look at the metaphorical significance of syphilis, the type of articles which Hudson, Hume and Rowland produced was the more common sort of syphilis-inspired criticism. The tradition of diagnosing disease based on literary evidence, rather than discussing why the disease existed and what function it had in the narrative, continued into recent years with works such as William Dean's "*Nice Wanton:* A Witness to Virulent Syphilis in the Tudor Age."[19] As the title implies, Dean explores the Tudor play as a pathologist would a body; his literary criticism is relegated to identifying the presence of a more virulent strain of syphilis as evinced by the anonymous author's impressions recorded

[17] Parolles' obsequies are scurvy because his curtseies, or bowing, is complicated by a syphilitic infection that has attacked his joints and contorted his body into strange postures. This symptom of the pox is a particular favorite of Thomas Nashe, who describes it with epithets such as "scabd hammes." See Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveler, The Works of Thomas Nashe,* vol. 2, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 95, or Nashe, *Lenten Stuffe,* vol. 3, 177.
[18] See for example my discussion on Nashe's scab-hammed monsieur on 178.
[19] William Dean, "*Nice Wanton*: A Witness to Virulent Syphilis in the Tudor Age," *Notes and Queries* 207.3 (1992), 285-289.

in the play.[20] Dean found that the author of *Nice Wanton*, through the fate and voice of Delilah, viewed syphilis as a divine punishment, but what he found most important is that "in doing so, he [the author] left to posterity the most detailed account in Tudor literature of the extraordinarily virulent nature of the disease at mid-century, an account which is fully consonant with that provided by Fracastoro."[21] Dean's observations are important to the reading of *Nice Wanton*, but only in the same way as a dictionary or concordance would be—he identifies syphilis in the interlude as an end in and of itself, without looking at why author has used syphilis and how it affects the play. Like the medico-historical critics, Dean only mined the texts for medical historical information and concluded that "Dalila's lamentation for her afflicted state is [...] an independent witness, to our knowledge of the disease in the earlier periods of its history in England."[22] In Dean's criticism, he provides a case study for early modern syphilis rather than an exploration of the dramatic role of the pox within the play.

The Eighties and the Development of Syphilis Criticism

Literary critics began to produce more involved readings of syphilis in Renaissance literature in the 1980s. The first of these was Aubrey Kail's work, *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare*.[23] Kail discussed Shakespeare's knowledge of syphilis in the chapter "Venereal Disease: 'The Pox.'" He revealed that syphilis was more than just the inspiration for a distasteful curse or an off-color joke. In longer syphilis conceits, Shakespeare, as well as many other playwrights, revealed a profound

[20] Dean apparently wrote his article after finding only one sentence of explanation in Young's work about syphilis in the play. See Alan R. Young, "The Christian Terence and the Moralities," *The English Prodigal Son Plays, Jacobean Drama Studies*, ed., James Hogg, vol. 88 (1979), 94.
[21] Dean, 289.
[22] Dean, 289.
[23] Kail, 55-86.

understanding of the disease as it was known to the medical and philosophical minds of his day. Kail specifically identified syphilis in nine of Shakespeare's plays, and enumerated a number of terms that relate to symptoms of the disease and treatment. The best example of Kail's research can be found in the passage in which he studied the famous pox-curse speech by Timon in 4.3. This is one of the most pockified passages in English literature. It reappears consistently in works of all disciplines that address syphilis. In 1912, Morris was mulling over the same passage which he prefaced with the comment that the "language shows a considerable knowledge of characteristics of secondary and tertiary syphilis."[24] However, while Morris provides only the briefest of explanations, Kail offered an extensive and well-researched description and explanation of each symptom:

> Diseases of the cranial and other bones have been common since ancient times, and have given the clinical picture of cranial tables. Painful nodes on the shin bones (periostitis) are probably meant by the expression 'strike their sharp shins'. Venereal ulceration of the larynx is next referred to—'crack the lawyer's voice…' The cleric (flamen) is made to bear the mark of infamy in the form of the white scaly skin eruption, probably a psoriatic syphilide. The next symptoms apply to that hideous disfigurement of chronic syphilis, loss of the nasal bones—'take the bridge away'. The fearful list of the effects of the chronic syphilis is concluded by impotence and baldness; the former is especially remarkable, as it is not observed to be a symptom until shortly before Shakespeare wrote this play.[25]

Kail skillfully explicated Timon's observation-curse in what was, in essence, the summation of more than a century of physicians', historians', sociologists', and literary critics' examinations of this one particular syphilitic passage in Shakespeare.

Kail rarely progressed beyond the identification of various terms associated with syphilis, and as a result, *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare* was mostly a literary-

[24] Morris, 26.
[25] Kail, 85.

critical extension of the medical-historical tradition of using Shakespeare's writings as a grand reference work on early modern disease and illness.[26] Other recent examples of this history-literary criticism fusion include David Hoeniger's *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* and Johannes Fabricius' *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England*, both of which appeared in the early 1990s. Whereas Kail had exclusively examined medicine in Shakespeare, *Medicine and Shakespeare* served as a work of medical history masquerading as literary criticism. Hoeniger directly attributed his source of inspiration to R.R. Simpson's *Shakespeare and Medicine*.[27] Simpson was a physician who identified and evaluated Shakespeare's medical diagnoses/observations; he dedicated his final chapter to venereal disease, and especially syphilis, but he had no concern for the disease's dramatic import beyond mere identification.[28]

Hoeniger's New Historical approach expanded upon Simpson's chapter. Hoeniger claimed his work was "intended for students of the literature, history, and thought of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and more especially, those who desire to understand, with the help of medical and related backgrounds, what many passages in Shakespeare's plays and poems mean."[29] In other words, Hoeniger imagined his modern student readership using *Medicine and Shakespeare* to decipher early modern texts. Much of what Hoeniger addressed, Kail covered six years before; he even repeated what is rapidly becoming the syphilitic anthem: the decoding of Timon's poxy advice to Alcibades' prostitutes (4.3.153-163). However, his work included examination of the poxy references of Shakespeare's contemporaries, such as

[26] This division is more semantic than concrete. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the fact that another of his works, "The Doctors in Shakespeare's Plays" appears in the medical journal, *The Australian Family Doctor*, rather than a journal of literary criticism, even though it is written in the same mode.
[27] F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 11.
[28] R.R. Simpson, *Shakespeare and Medicine* (Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1959), 248-259.
[29] Hoeniger, 13.

Beaumont, Shirley and Jonson: something which was beyond the scope of *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare*.[30]

Fabricius' *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* predated Hoeniger's work but did not appear in English until 1994.[31] Fabricius excelled in examining syphilis as a societal disease, and he did this with a far greater knowledge of early modern literature than many previous critics. He included more literary references than either Kail or Hoeniger. However, Fabricius' intention was remarkably similar to Hoeniger's: "references to syphilis in the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries... have been covered only minimally by medical scholars, and so a systematic examination of this area is a much-needed task and one that has been undertaken in the present study."[32] Fabricius' work could nevertheless be considered the apogee of the multidisciplinary critical style of Kail and Hoeniger in which Shakespeare and his contemporaries' literary ventures were identified and examined for their historical and sociological value: the observations within them were treated as fact, or at the least, as contemporary, eyewitness experience. Fabricius' research—like that of Hoeniger, Kail and the doctor-critics—used examples from fictions as the basis for factual case studies. As criticism, they contributed to an understanding of pockified texts insomuch as they assisted in the identification of syphilis, but beyond this, they bring little to readings of these texts because they failed to explore the role of the metaphor within the narrative or thematic structure. Furthermore, in their effort to discuss Shakespeare's poxy observations as fact, they often ignored or marginalized non-fiction writers like Erasmus, von Hutten, or the several doctors who write about

[30] Beaumont and Shirley in reference to the disease itself, and Jonson in reference to the cure. See Hoeniger, 221, 245.
[31] Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1994).
[32] Fabricius, xiii.

syphilis in fiction or non-fiction, including Fracastoro, Rabelais, Paracelsus and William Clowes.

Shakespeare was invoked, along with a large number of his contemporary playwrights, poets, pamphleteers and medical writers, to illustrate Fabricius' sociological survey. Fabricius, however, did not leave the reader entirely bereft of literary criticism; unfortunately, once he undertook this endeavor he quickly over-shot the mark. *Timon* (4.3.153-66) receives its usual due, but with a disappointing lack of precision. When Timon sent Timandra and Phyrinia out to curse the Athenian world with syphilis, his final injunction is: "and quell the source of all erection" (4.3.165-66). Fabricius, who claimed to offer a "medical interpretation" of Shakespeare's works, stated that "impotence is not normally an effect of syphilis but may be a psychological side effect of contracting the disease."[33] However, doctors have argued that syphilis does cause impotence.[34] What is even more disappointing was Fabricius' descent into that favorite amusement of pox-the-writer, which he did with an extraordinary relish stating, "there is reason to believe that syphilis was contracted by the first Duke of Buckingham, the second Earl of Essex, the third Earl of Pembroke, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, and William Davenant;" he even returns to the exact suppositions of Lane: "circumstantial evidence... further suggests that even William Shakespeare may have fallen a victim to syphilis."[35] Fabricius traversed the same analytical avenues as Lane but with a bit more flourish: he placed a portrait of Shakespeare next to one of Davenant; not only to establish any possible familial similarity, but also to comment on Davenant's "saddle nose," which he

[33] Fabricius, 273.
[34] See Kail, 85.
[35] Fabricius, 273.

claimed was the result of a syphilitic infection.[36] From Lane to Fabricius, we have come full circle: again, textual instances create a progenitive solution in the febrile/fertile mind of the scholar, and syphilis in the text becomes an affliction of the author. To Fabricius, it seemed that syphilis taught Shakespeare to write, since it is "a disease that could well have contributed to his [Shakespeare's] deep understanding of human suffering and despair."[37] Rather than addressing the rich metaphorical power of the pox in Shakespeare's texts, Fabricius would rather pox the author.

Kail, Hoeniger, and Fabricius all expanded (in the breadth of their research) upon Hume and Nicholas' narrow observations. The three authors have presented an encyclopedic collection of literary instances of early modern syphilis and its cures and therefore fulfill both Hoeniger and Fabricius' expressed intention of creating reference works that assist the student of literature with his or her understanding of early modern texts. The same might as well be said of Williams' dictionary, and while these authors all have compiled an enormous amount of evidence—they, with the exception of Williams, have had very little to say about its role in the literature.

From a critical standpoint, like the medical and historical works that preceded it, Kail, Hoeniger and Fabricius' greatest success was their identification of the richness of early modern pox euphemisms. Kail's work foreshadowed the fundamental flaw in their approach: reading Shakespeare and his contemporaries for a scientific view of early modern medicine is erroneous. Early modern literary references can make compelling evidence for social history, but they should not be used as empirical medical research. It must be remembered that the works involved are fiction—not a usual source of reliable observation, and authors like Shakespeare, despite their sometimes formidable powers of observation, had as far as we know

[36] Fabricius, 252. Davenant admits to his syphilis in the poem, "To Doctor Cademan, Physician to the Queen;" however, the evidence for Shakespeare having fathered Davenant is slim.
[37] Fabricius, 273.

little or no medical experience.[38] Finally as critical texts, none of the three explore in any depth the implications of the disease in the context of the works themselves.

Recent Poxy Literary Criticism

Greg Bentley was the first writer to truly examine the literary function of the pox in book-length form. In his work, *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in "Troilus and Cressida," "Measure for Measure", and "Timon of Athens,"* Bentley provided a brief history of syphilis; he examined pox references in the plays, and he explained the importance of syphilis in those texts.[39] His more insightful foray into pox criticism was prefigured in the early eighties by several articles such as, "'Foul Sin Gathering Head': Venereal Disease in Shakespeare's Henry the Fourth Part II," in which R.W. McConchie examined the meaning of the pox metaphor in *2 Henry IV*.[40] This was followed by Greg Bentley's own "Coppernose: The Nature of Burden's Disease in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*."[41] Bentley found that syphilis played a role in Greene's play where images of copper noses are often not the red noses of alcoholics but literal, artificially constructed copper noses of bridge-fallen syphilitics. And at the end of the eighties, in "Shakespeare's Sonnet 55," Ernest Fontanna anticipated Schoenfeldt's poxy readings of the Sonnets. Fontanna embraced a poxy interpretation of Sonnet 55 that explored the textual import of the disease rather than the social history and context when he discovered:

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[38] Strangely, the critics interested in studying literary texts for syphilis case-studies have largely ignored Rabelais and Thomas Lodge's pox references, even though both these writers were also doctors; furthermore, they have generally ignored von Hutten and Grünpeck's first-hand records of their poxy trials.

[39] Greg Bentley, *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in "Troilus and Cressida," "Measure for Measure", and "Timon of Athens"* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

[40] R.W. McConchie, "'Foul Sin Gathering Head:' Venereal Disease in Shakespeare's Henry the IV, Part II," *Parergon* 32 (1982), 31.

[41] Greg Bentley, "Coppernose: The Nature of Burden's Disease in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*," *English Language Notes*, 22.4 (1984), 28-32.

> The effect of time, personified as a whore, on the hypothetical stone statue of the young man, is identified in metaphor with the effects of syphilis on the body; the statue will be besmeared, covered with metaphoric blains, lesions and scars [...] While the speaker celebrates the life-bestowing power of his poetry against the disfiguring, disease-giving enchantments of a female time, his poetry assumes the associations of a virility that is unsusceptible to the venereal disfigurements of "sluttish time." [...] Thus, while the embrace of feminine time defaces as syphilis the stone simulacra of the young man's body, the disembodied amatory utterance of the male voice is seen as generative and vivifying.[42]

Fontanna's short article was based on the phrase "besmeared with sluttish time." He associated "sluttish" with the way that Shakespeare used "sluttish" in *Timon* (4.4.149-151). Therefore, he believed the Sonnet's imagery was also syphilitic—that time was as corrosive as the effects of the pox. Fontanna concluded with what may be construed as a queer-theory reading of "Sonnet 55:" the older male persona became the life-giving alternative to a deadly, syphilitic, feminine time.

Winfried Schleiner produced a feminist reading of the role of syphilis in Renaissance writing.[43] Schleiner took an unusual, though admirable, approach focusing on early medical texts rather than literary works. Schleiner's reading began with the argument that early modern pox references were almost always gendered: "one cannot read far into the works of Renaissance writers on syphilis without being struck by the gendered perceptions about the disease in the period." [44] Furthermore, he discovered that: "pervasive in many contexts of Renaissance physicians' writing about this disease was the assumption that woman are the agents, the active infectors."[45] This belief is supported by Williams, who found the argument that the

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[42] Ernest Fontanna, "Shakespeare's Sonnet 55," *The Explicator* 45.3 (1987), 6-8.
[43] Winfried Schleiner, "Infection and Cure through Women: Renaissance Constructions of Syphilis," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24.3 (1994), 499-517.
[44] Schleiner, 501.
[45] Schleiner, 502.

pox is supposedly transmitted with the woman's seed.[46] Schleiner went on to describe how women came to be considered the cause and receptacle of disease as well as the cure.

Gordon Williams also opened new interdisciplinary venues for research when he expanded the syphilis metaphor into the realm of Renaissance pictography in the chapter, "Pox and Gold: Timon's New World Heritage," in *Shakespeare, Sex, and the Print Revolution.* Williams was apparently struck by Caravaggio's Bacchus (in Florence's Uffizi Gallery), which he described as rendered with "sultry, hooded eyes, plucked eyebrows, dirty fingernails, and a toga which might be a soiled bed sheet, so as to give him a well-used look."[47] From an examination of this image and others, he concluded:

> A still more pervasive element of late-sixteenth century art is pox, which had wrought its own changes in the European consciousness with the discovery of the New World. Bacchus is touched by this through the bowl of fruit which he has to hand, much of it rotten. The effect is consolidated by the cup of wine which he holds out to this unseen companion (a role supplied by the spectator)—presumably a pox-poisoned chalice.[48]

From this rather auspicious beginning, Williams entered into an involved critique that equated pox and gold as products of the New World:

> The riches of America are hardly distinct from its paramount disease. What promised to be a recovered Golden Age which might be expressed in a new celebration of the body was undercut by the advent of syphilis. Indeed, the golden reality proved as pernicious as pox and might be more truly taken to be Montezuma's revenge.[49]

Having established a critical concept, Williams cited contemporary accounts which prophecy that New World wealth will be as dangerous to England as the policy of

[46] Williams, *Dictionary,* 605.
[47] Williams, *Revolution,* 129.
[48] Williams, *Revolution,* 129.
[49] Williams, *Revolution,* 138.

enclosure, and he used these to argue that gold and pox are destabilizing elements in Jacobean England. From there, he returned to *Timon*, but unlike Kail, Hoeniger and Fabricius, he had something new to contribute to the realm of literary criticism when he found that "if gold as corrupter is associated with New World wealth by Shakespeare's contemporaries, there is a sense in which Timon sets up an alliance between the two curses of the Americas, gold and pox—the latter too ironically transformed in his mind into a cleanser rather than a defiler."[50] Interestingly, Williams had apparently let this idea ferment for more than twenty-five years, since he had long-ago made a brief reference to it in "An Elizabethan Disease," when he said: "Shakespeare's Timon chooses to apostrophize gold in a speech of crude sexual innuendo. For Timon, gold is a pox which destroys the sexual/spiritual health of those who harbor it."[51] After more than a century of medical, history, and literary syphilis criticism in Shakespeare, Gordon Williams, like Greg Bentley, finally explored the pox as a literary construct by trying to explain the presence of syphilis in early modern texts from a historical and cultural perspective.

Bentley and Williams have both done painstaking research, but there is much more to be said. Bentley never expounded on an all-important fact: syphilis was not just present in the three works he researched; it appeared to a greater or lesser extent in no less than twenty-three of Shakespeare's plays. Furthermore, Bentley—like the vast majority of the medical-historical writers, excluding Fabricius—did not include Shakespeare's contemporaries. Williams focused only on *Timon* in his pox discussion in *Revolution*; however, his knowledge of syphilis throughout the Renaissance canon is very much apparent in his *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in*

[50] Williams, *Revolution,* 143.
[51] Williams, *Revolution,* 44.

Shakespearean and Stuart Literature and *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language.*[52]

Margaret Healy and Jonathan Gil Harris might be viewed as the current experts on poxy literary criticism.[53] Healy's most influential work, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England*, is dedicated to exploring the images of the plague and pox generated in Renaissance English literature.[54] She, like Williams, grasped the theatrical and visual representations of the pox in early modern writings, such as in her discussion of the *nupta contagioso* emblem, as well as the visual aspect of early Tudor stagings of syphilitic bodies. Furthermore, she described the literary nature of the pox blazon and how it was used to engender meaning. Her works represent a complex and unified attempt to create a poxy reading of texts which strives to explain both the meanings behind syphilitic references and how and why they are so often present in early modern literature. Healy is also exceptional in her attention to the pox in the writings of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Although Healy addressed "Shakespeare's Pocky Bodies," she liberally interspersed her Shakespeare commentary with a discussion on the pox works of other Jacobean playwrights, such as Dekker and Middleton.[55]

Healy examined how medico-moral pox representations from the middle of the century anticipate the more complex political and cultural tropes which appear in seventeenth-century drama. While she has created an insightful work, I believe that

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[52] Gordon Williams, *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language* (London: Athlone, 1997).
[53] Roy Anselment should also be included in this group. However, he largely focused on the examination of the pox in latter seventeenth century literature. See Roy A. Anselment, "The Plague of Venus," *The Realms of Apollo: Literature and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 131-171.
[54] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave, 2001). Healy also has several good articles that discuss syphilis in early modern literature. See also Margaret Healy, "Pericles and the Pox," *Shakespeare's Late Plays,* ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999), Margaret Healy, "Seeing Contagious Bodies in Early Modern England," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture,* eds. Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000).
[55] Healy, *Fictions,* 172.

any larger understanding of English Renaissance literature can benefit from a more detailed analysis of the pox metaphor. *Fictions*' two chapters on syphilis do not allow for the scope to develop a full portrayal of the metaphor and its relationship to satire, subversion and popular literature. While Healy accepted that "syphilis is consistently seen [...] as the generic handmaid of satire, and its extensive deployment in the period's literature consequently reveals a vogue for satire," she did not explore the full importance of late-sixteenth-century satire and its role in the development of the pox metaphor.[56] Instead, she focused on Erasmus and early Tudor drama and then skips half a century to address Jacobean pox metaphors, explaining that "fifty years on the pox is being deployed on the Jacobean stage for related, yet shifting ideological purposes, and with increasingly sophisticated aesthetic effect."[57] She argued that she wished "to explore the important links between Tudor and Jacobean traditions of syphilis' dramatic representation; links which have been almost completely occluded by late twentieth-century scholarship."[58] But in doing so, she omitted the extremely fertile period of the 1590s when the pox metaphor was evolving with the genre of satire into the flourishing Jacobean dramatic form. There is much still to be gained in a discussion of the parallel development between syphilis and satire that occurs during the sixteenth century.

Whereas Healy envisioned early modern pockified bodies in medical terms, Jonathan Gil Harris saw early modern pox as a vehicle for economic discourse.[59] In Harris' most recent work, *Sick Economies,* he divided his pox reading between two chapters: the first addressed *The Comedy of Errors,* while the second looked at the

[56] Healy, *Fictions,* 15.
[57] Healy, *Fictions,* 151.
[58] Healy, *Fictions,* 153.
[59] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2004).

pox in Shakespeare's problem plays. At the opening of his first pockified chapter, he succinctly defined his reading and states how it is different from previous critics:

> I offer a different strategy for decoding the syphilitic references of *The Comedy of Errors*—one that divulges neither the biographical details of Shakespeare's life and pathologies, nor even the phenomenology of the syphilis epidemic in early modern England and Europe. I instead situate the play's treatment of disease within a broader constellation of discourses and structures of feeling that accompanied the enormous growth of international commerce in the sixteenth century.[60]

By refusing to address the possible role of "Shakespeare's... pathologies," Harris politely abandoned other pox critics' intimations that Shakespeare's pockified writing hid his own pox infection. Instead, he convincingly decoded the role of syphilis as part of an early modern economic discourse. Harris' scholarship is invaluable for anyone who wishes to understand the importance of the pox in early modern literature. However, Harris, like Healy, primarily focused on Jacobean pox images. Harris used *The Comedy of Errors* as the poxy precursor of Shakespeare's problem plays. Neither Harris nor Healy addressed the Wits' protean innovation and wide-ranging application of the pox metaphor; nor the verse satirists' subsequent treatment of the disease and its relation to corrupt consumption, melancholy, malcontents and misanthropy; nor the development of the pox metaphor during the early years of the sixteenth century in any depth. While Healy saw the pox as a "medico-moral phenomenon" and Harris argued that it is an economic metaphor, I have attempted a more holistic approach to reading the pox metaphor. By tracing the metaphor from its creation to its most complex form, I have attempted to integrate Healy's medical-moral textual politics with Harris' economic reading into a unified whole in which I argue that the pox metaphor represented a unique early modern discursive

[60] Harris, *Sick Economies*, 30.

phenomenon that described all forms of corrupt consumption through the conflation of consumption—moral, economic, physical and otherwise—with corruption.

Disease Theory

While no other book-length critical works have been written, there has been an increasing awareness of the pox in English Renaissance literature, which has been accompanied by what might be described as pox theory, or a pox-influenced reading of texts. In 1987, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor claimed that Shakespeare's texts are, in essence, pockified:

> In a famous passage in Harold Pinter's "The Homecoming," Lenny the pimp memorably and at length describes his encounter with a woman who is "falling apart with the pox." At the end of his story, the listener asks, "How did you know she was diseased?" Lenny answers, "I decided she was." An editor, in emending, decides that a text is diseased; such decisions may be mistaken. But we know that every early printed edition of Shakespeare's plays is more or less diseased; every compositor and every scribe commits errors. Corruption is somewhere is certain; where, is uncertain.[61]

Wells and Taylor explained that all Shakespeare's texts are diseased, since we have no authoritative texts. In doing so, they described textual corruption in the terms of the disease that Shakespeare spoke about the most—the pox. Wells and Taylor explained the nature of textual corruption: we do not have original Shakespearean texts, and even if we did, we would not be certain that we could clearly translate the nuances of the obsolete language. Even through the act of translating archaic slang, we are missing something since the plays were meant to be seen and heard, not read and laboriously deciphered. As a result, Wells and Taylor claimed that every Shakespearean text is diseased.

[61] Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 6.

Beyond Wells and Taylor there are other critics and theorists who have greatly contributed to poxy disease theory. Susan Sontag's essays, *Disease and Its Metaphors* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors,* are both excellent studies in the cultural and linguistic nuances of disease. Since Sontag addressed contemporary disease metaphors, she did not address syphilis in detail; however, as a disease which commanded an impressive metaphorical arsenal and as the early modern correlate to modern AIDS, the pox often appeared in her argument. Sontag even acknowledged the metaphorical tribute AIDS owed syphilis: "rather like syphilis, AIDS seems to foster ominous fantasies about a disease that is a marker of both individual and social vulnerabilities."[62]

Wells and Taylor's theory of medico-linguistic corruption was broadened—and paradoxically hindered—by Keir Elam who argued that: "Shakespeare's discourse is, as it were, referentially contaminated by the corrupted and strange vapors of the historical contexts or dangerous years of the poem's and plays' respective conceptions."[63] According to Elam then, not only were Shakespeare's texts compositorally and editorially degraded, they were also referentially, or historically, contaminated. While Elam astutely argued that the experience of disease invaded Shakespeare's writings, he suppressed the role of syphilis in order to address the more socially acceptable plague.

While Elam's contribution to disease theory is highly informative, he perpetuated that venerable tradition of literary critics in tat he muted the importance of syphilis within his discussion. Elam discussed pockified texts and passages, and ostensibly discussed the plague, but did not mention the word syphilis. When he was

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[62] Susan Sontag, "AIDS and Its Metaphors," *Illness and Its Metaphors and AIDS and Its Metaphors,* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 151.
[63] Keir Elam, "'I'll Plague Thee for that Word:' Language, Performance, and Communicable Diseases," *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997), 24.

cornered into recognizing the importance of syphilis in his disease theory, he demurely offered a discreet nod toward the "'pox' and its cognates" and "'pox'-ridden *Troilus and Cressida*."[64] Elam seemed to find the plague an acceptable topic for his article, but pestilence's "French nephew," syphilis, is a sublimated subject.[65] This is rather ironic, considering the purported focus of Elam's article was the naming of disease in the text, and the power of words in shaping disease. Elam was unwilling to name syphilis; as a result, he revealed a perhaps subconscious avoidance of the shame of syphilis. In his conclusion Elam stated (of Timon):

> Even his precious pestilential proclamations are hollow and void because feigned or fictional and thus as sick as the world they are launched against. All that remains for Timon to do is let language end, but this is another empty fiction. Language does not end with his death.[66]

Elam criticized the diseased nature of perhaps the most syphilitic of Renaissance texts without ever mentioning syphilis.

The Cult of Decorum and the PLAGUE/pox Binary

Elam's avoidance of syphilis in his discussion perpetuated what might be described as the PLAGUE/pox binary. The plague had long been within the realm of legitimate criticism. Syphilis, however, was considered a shameful disease, and its association with sex and shame has silenced many literary critics who seem to fear contamination by association. Since most scholars that have addressed the pox have concluded from the basis of pox references in their subjects' works that the authors were poxed, perhaps it is no wonder that the majority of critics avoided writing about syphilis for fear of similar infamy.

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[64] Elam, 24.
[65] This kinship of the plague and the pox was expressed in the early seventeenth century in *The Meeting of Gallants.* See Thomas Dekker, *The Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinarie* in *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker,* ed. F.P. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 110.
[66] Elam, 27.

The pox and the plague were the two most important diseases in the early modern period. This can be ascertained by the market for information on the diseases, which is evidenced by the vast number of early modern publications about both afflictions. Furthermore, social and medical historians assert that venereal disease was a major concern in early modern society. For example, Mary Dobson has compiled a table in *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England,* which ranked the extent which early modern south-east Englanders feared illnesses: sexually transmitted disease was ranked third out of twelve negative classifications at "loathing" in a range between "terror" (which was the Plague) and irritation.[67] Other medical historians, such as Andrew Wear, recognized that "Apart from the plague, it was the 'pox,' which probably included modern syphilis that had the greatest cultural and psychological impact" on early modern English medicine.[68] Early modern fears of the disease conquered any sense of propriety. As syphilis became less of a health concern, the shame of the disease became greater. This early modern tendency was reflected in modern criticism; for example, Elam felt free to discuss the plague—a deadly but respectable disease—while he remained silent about syphilis even though he discussed extremely pockified texts. Elam openly identified the plague: he described it in his text as the "bubonic plague," and "*pastuerella pestis*." Elam's references to syphilis do not benefit from a similarly clear signification. Instead of naming syphilis, he described it only in passing references as the pox, which is a somewhat ambiguous term for modern readers since "pox" has since the eighteenth century been most often used to describe small pox. Elam went as far as to support his plague arguments with pox metaphors, rather than addressing the problem of syphilis.

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[67] Dobson, 489.
[68] Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 306.

In recent years, some critics have begun to rectify previous scholars' avoidance of taboo subjects. Gail Paster, for example, illuminated the type of skewed reasoning behind this form of paradoxical poxy silence in *The Body Embarrassed* when she wrote "The Incontinent Women of City Comedy:"

> Even now, when so much intellectual attention is directed toward the social formation of the historicized body and its literary representations, the cultural inhibitions that are part of the body's history have made sex easier to discuss than excretion. The bedroom is a discursive site as the bathroom or—to be less anachronistic—the chamber pot and the privy are not, because we are the silenced inheritors of what Keith Thomas has called "the cult of decorum."[69]

Paster was correct in her assumption the bedroom had become a "discursive site" for scholarly discussion; however, the ailments of the bedroom, namely syphilis, have remained at least as shameful as the matter of excretion. As Paster suggested, the cult of decorum—which once silenced discussions on sexuality—had diminished in the twentieth century. While Paster argued that subjects such as excretion remained unacceptable, syphilis, like excretion, had long remained outside what might be considered acceptable scholarly discussion.[70] The growing environment of critical openness has provided the opportunity to look at these formally taboo elements which are vital to understanding both the world and literature of early modern England.

Richard Knowles discussed the history of the cult of decorum in relation to variorum editors such as George Steevens, Isaac Reed, Edmond Malone, James Boswell, and Horace Furness, who rather poorly addressed Shakespeare's "indelicate" passages. Knowles noted that the editors do address relatively uncut versions of

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[69] Gail Paster. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 23.

[70] Since the late 1990s subjects such as excretion and the pox have become acceptable topics of scholarship with such works on excretion such as Bruce Thomas Boeher, *The Fury of Men's Gullets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) and the pox criticism by Margaret Healy and Jonathan Gil Harris that I will discuss later in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

Shakespeare's plays, but they did so, "with some amusing expedients and evasions that reflect a considerable discomfort, doubtless in some measure culturally based, with the enterprise."[71] Several other critics, most of whom espouse reading Renaissance texts with an awareness of the early modern body-centered episteme, have begun to explore how the traditionally taboo subjects are both very much present and meaningful in Renaissance texts.[72] Paster and Boehrer recognized both the traditional rectitude and continuing resistance, to subjects such as excretion. The sexual revolution may have allowed literary critics to explore the domains of sexuality, but excretion had remained taboo until the last years of the twentieth century—just as the pall of centuries of moral condemnation, buttressed by a still-extant visceral reaction of fear and horror, had muted literary discourse on syphilis in Renaissance texts. Keith Thomas coined the term, "the cult of decorum" in 1977; Paster recognized its continuing relevancy in 1993: though greatly diminished, the same prudish practice has remained still a silent institution. If Gary Taylor was right about all recent criticism being a reaction not so much to the primary texts as to the previous criticisms, then this work is to some extent dependent not on what previous critics have written but what they have not.[73]

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[71] Richard Knowles, "Cum Notis Variorum: Sex in the Variorums," *The Shakespeare Newsletter,* 47.1 (1997), 3.

[72] For both syphilis and the concept of the body-centered episteme, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), or Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves.* For an example of criticism on another taboo subject see Moulton's work on early modern sexualized writing, Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[73] Taylor's comments on the nature of literary criticism emphasized both its transitory and derivative nature as well as its self-sustaining quality:

> But the new thing which it does cannot be definitive, or it would preclude the production of more new things next year. The interpretive work published in 1987 can adopt one of only two possible attitudes toward the colossal output of 1986: ignore it or criticize and revise it. Either strategy ensures the transience of previous interpretations

Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare,* 306.

An example of selective excision appears in the Manchester University Press edition of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* edited by E.A. Horsman.[74] *Bartholomew Fair* is a play with significant syphilis references, but somehow Horsman ignores the disease. In addition to the syphilis references, *Bartholomew Fair* is an extremely bawdy, sexual play. Strangely, Horsman made only one single notation in a sea of sexual and syphilis puns, quibbles, and slang: he admitted that Godso (3.4.110) was an English bastardization of the Italian *cazzo*—or penis; yet, even then, rather than saying "penis," Horsman hid behind the Latin, *membrum virile*.[75] In a similar example, R.F. Patterson actually footnoted a passage of Latin verse in *Jonson's Conversations* to justify his reason for not translating it, or as he explained: it is "just tolerable in the decent obscurity of Latin, [but it] is not to be endured in English."[76] This type of obfuscation is part of a time-honored tradition in literary criticism:

> The latter kind of note is in fact common in Furness (the nineteenth century variorum editor), learnedly discussing a bawdy phrase at length but hinting at the bawdry not at all, or obliquely in passing... Another technique that Furness adopts from his predecessors is a venerable one: to provide an explanation in a foreign language that only the incorruptible learned can understand.[77]

Horsman upheld these nineteenth-century precepts in a late twentieth-century critical edition of the work, specifically designed to educate students of literature.

Horsman's work with *Bartholomew Fair* is a Revels edition—ironically named for the office that both registered and censored Renaissance drama—and it was created expressly for university students. Revels editions were designed to provide a new look at English Renaissance plays. The general editor, Clifford Leech included

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[74] Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. E.A. Horsman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960).
[75] Jonson, *Bartholomew,* 84.
[76] William Drummond, *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden,* ed. R. F. Patterson (London: Blackie and Son, 1923), 8.
[77] Knowles, 4.

in his preface the statement that "annotations will attempt to explain difficult passages and to provide such comments and illustrations of usage as the editor considers desirable."[78] Of particular interest is the second part of the passage—it directly implies that the editors can manipulate texts by highlighting what they believe is good or valuable. Obviously any editing and commentary which are intended to explicate a text will naturally be colored by the editor's personal philosophies and experience. That Leach openly admits this, indicated, not an awareness of the unavoidable impartiality/corrupting influence of an editor, but also a deliberate decision to privilege certain themes and meanings within the texts. Horsman's editorial work is an example of editorial intent overriding authorial intent. Horsman privileged numerous terms with explanatory footnotes (fifty-two terms in the introduction alone), but his sense of decorum forced him to either excise or mask words which carry connotations of sex or sexually transmitted disease.

Differing viewpoints are, of course, the basis of academic discourse. Readings, however, should not be falsified by the unqualified removal of vital parts of the text. The topics of sexuality and disease began to capture the imagination of literary critics in the late 1950s, and yet, a decade later, Horsman was still able to avoid any recognition of syphilis within the play. *Bartholomew Fair* is a brilliant play, but it is sexually explicit, and yet Horsman decided to ignore one of the largest and least accessible elements of Jacobean slang—those words which are concerned with sex and sexually transmitted disease.

Horsman's avoidance of syphilis and sex was hardly unusual. A more recent example involves Giorgio Melchiori's 1989 edition of *The Second Part of Henry IV*.[79]

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[78] Clifford Leech, preface, *Bartholomew Fair* by Ben Jonson, ed. E.A. Horsman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960), v.

[79] Giorgio Melchiori, introduction, *The Second Part of Henry IV* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

2 Henry IV is considered one of Shakespeare's most pockified texts. Not only did Shakespeare address the diseased state of England but the diseased body of Falstaff—and both serve to represent not only physical but also political sickness. Doctors and literary critics have long identified Falstaff and his comrade's syphilitic dialogue.[80] One can only guess why Melchiori chose to ignore the presence of syphilis in the play; if nothing else, his choice was possibly a testament to the continuity and popularity of the cult of decorum. The editor's omission of syphilis seems strangely incongruous, since he devoted a section to the introduction to "Time and Disease" in which he stressed:

> What must be underlined, though, is the constant association of the view of time in the play with images of sickness and disease. In no other play by Shakespeare do these two words, and their compounds or derivatives, occur as frequently: "disease" thirteen times, and "sick" or "sickness" no less than twenty-one, apart from a number of mentions of specific diseases and references to physical mutilation running through the play.[81]

Since Melchiori made a specific attempt to isolate the concept of disease, his failure to recognize *2 Henry IV* as a pockified text is somewhat irregular, especially in the light of McConchie's convincing article and Hoeniger's revelation that Shakespeare referred to venereal disease more than any other illness.[82] In an edition of the play dedicated to highlighting the dramatic importance of disease, how could Melchiori have missed the numerous poxy outbursts, such as Falstaff's:

> A pox of this gout, or a gout of this pox, for the one or the other plays rogue with my great toe. 'Tis no matter if I do halt: I have the wars for my color, and my pension shall seem more reasonable. A good wit will make use of anything: I will turn disease into commodity. (1.2.191-195)[83]

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[80] Morris, Kail, McConchie and Hoeniger all refer to syphilis in *2 Henry IV*.
[81] Melchiori, 29.
[82] Hoeniger, 219.
[83] I will discuss the poxy implications of this passage in detail in chapter 5.

The editor's reading of this passage is indicative of his whole approach to the text. The best he could muster concerning the pox is a brief mention of that Falstaff "turns a dishonorable disease to personal advantage as means of getting a pension."[84] What disease? Melichiori refused to name the disease. Is it the gout? Is it the pox—which, as I have said, is an ambiguous word for modern readers? Without an explanation, most readers will not know that the pox is syphilis: a point with which Melchiori seemed perfectly content—that the pox would remain a secret for that group Knowles called the "incorruptible learned." Nor was this particular excision accidental. Throughout his footnotes, the editor never mentioned syphilis—he would not name the disease. In the above-mentioned case, Melchiori labeled the pox as the ambiguously innocuous "venereal disease."[85] Similarly, Melchiori glossed over the extended syphilitic exchange between Falstaff and Doll in 2.4. Again, he had a minor footnote hinting that the exchange is about "venereal disease;" however, in the introduction, when he addressed the subject he did not mention that the dialogue had anything to do with venereal disease at all.[86]

To perhaps better understand Melchiori's apparent fear of textual syphilis, one must look at his article, "Dying of a Sweat: Falstaff and Oldcastle."[87] In the article, Melchiori was more interested in the political-historical aspects of Falstaff contrasted to Shakespeare's plausible source of historical inspiration: Sir John Oldcastle, rather than the metaphorical importance of Falstaff's unfortunate social disease. The only mention that he makes to the possibility that the bloat knight is running rampant with syphilis is a fragment embedded in the second part of a compound sentence: "commentators take comfort from the fact that, though Falstaff is not 'in it' [*Henry*

[84] Hoeniger, 219.
[85] Hoeniger, 78.
[86] Hoeniger, 29.
[87] Melchiori, 210-211.

V], at least, his death (not in France but in Eastcheap) is duly reported, and they proceed to speculate on what is meant by the fatal 'sweat:' sweating sickness (a name for the plague) or venereal disease and its treatment by sweating?"[88] In this passage, Melchiori's general avoidance of the pox has resulted in a misreading of the text—the "sweating sickness" is not the plague but another disease altogether that is probably related to influenza. Andrew Wear succinctly described the sweating sickness mystery: "the 'English sweat' which appeared in 1485, left after 1551, and may have been influenza, and a variety of strange fevers added to the uncertainty of a world already overfilled with familiar diseases."[89] Wear reinforced his argument with a number of other recent articles that clearly differentiate between the plague and the sweating sickness.[90] This same sweating sickness was the source of considerable fear amongst early modern Englishmen, and it happens to be the only disease, besides syphilis and the plague, to be treated in English in book-length form in the sixteenth century. Melchiori's argument was not based on these textual cues, but on the simple fact that Falstaff cannot have the pox due to historical and religious-political inferences, suggesting, in other words, that if Falstaff is Oldcastle, then he could not have the pox because Oldcastle lived long before syphilis was thought to have appeared in Europe. This argument completely ignored Shakespeare's use of syphilis in his plays set in the classical era, like *Antony, Troilus* and *Timon.*

Exclusion of the pox was the rule rather than the exception in traditional criticism. Helena Watts Baum's *The Satiric and the Didactic in Ben Jonson's Comedy* (1947), Alan C. Dessen's *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (1971) and Willard

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[88] Melchiori, 211.
[89] Wear, 15.
[90] Wear cites: A. Dyer, "The English Sweating Sickness of 1551: an Epidemic Anatomised," *Medical History*, 41, 1997, 362-384; M. Taviner, G. Thwaites and V. Gant, "The English Sweating Sickness, 1485-1551: A Viral Pulmonary Disease?," *Medical History,* 42, 1998, 96-98; J.R. Carlson, and P.W. Hammond, "The English Sweating Sickness (1485-*c.*1551): a New Perspective on Disease Aetiology," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 54, January 1999, 23-54.

Farnham's *The Shakespearean Grotesque* (1971) all ignored elements of syphilis in the plays that they examined, even though its inclusion would have edified their arguments.[91] Baum recognized Jonson's innumerable references to lust and the result of lust—disease and death, but she did not mention syphilis—the most dominant and striking manifestation of the topic she was exploring. The graphic depiction of lust, sex and disease was typical of Jonson's city comedy satires and was used to expose the degrading nature of lust. Jonson was a stern moralist in a theoretical rather than autobiographical sense; nevertheless, Jonsonian characters ruled by lust are gulls rather than protagonists, and lust is never presented in a privileged position. While Baum, with some courage, examined lust, sexuality and satire in Jonson's plays, she failed to mention the importance of syphilis in his works and the intrinsic relationship of the pox with the subjects which she was examining. Dessen discussed the diseases of the body and the mind in *Bartholomew Fair*—he even recognized Overdo's "defense of 'the poor innocent pox,'" when Overdo blamed tobacco, not the pox, for rotting noses.[92] The destruction of nasal bones and cartilage was a well-known symptom of syphilis, and Overdo's mistaken condemnation of tobacco smoke married ideas of physical and mental disease—a correlation that would have fit nicely into the critic's argument; Dessen, however, does not build on this knowledge. Farnham examined a number of Shakespeare's most syphilitic plays including *The Second Part of Henry IV*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*. In all three plays, syphilis is a primary element of the plot, and it would seem that it should be a major part of any discussion on the grotesque. While Farnham did mention *Measure for Measure*'s grotesque sexual elements in the form of "the lust of the flesh that man

[91] Helena Watts Baum, *The Satiric and the Didactic in Ben Jonson's Comedy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 86-103; Alan C. Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Willard Farnham, *The Shakespearean Grotesque* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971).
[92] Dessen, 163.

shares with animals," yet he ignores syphilis, the seemingly inherent product of that lust.[93]

Farnham's failure to mention syphilis in his discussion is particularly striking because the overtly pockified nature of *Measure for Measure.* As opposed to Claudio's venial transgression, Lucio's brothel-going crowd and their pox infections are an image of the real problems that beset the duchy. After the First Gentleman admits that he's poxed (1.2.29-40), Lucio says of Mistress Overdone whom he calls "Madam Mitigation" (1.2.43):

> I
> have purchased as many diseases under her roof as
> come to—
> *Second Gentleman*: To what, I pray?
> *Lucio*: Judge
> *Second Gentleman*: To three thousand dolours a year?
> *First Gentleman*: Ay, and more.
> *Lucio*: A French crown more
> *Lucio*: Nay not, as one would say, healthy, but so sound
> as things that are hollow—thy bones are hollow,
> impiety has made a feast of thee.
> *First Gentleman*: [to Mistress Overdone] How now, which
> of your hips has the most profound sciatica?
> (1.2.43-55)

In the discussion, Lucio and the Gentlemen equate their brothel transactions with syphilis. The dollars/dolours quibble is this: the three thousand *dollars*, or cash, that they spend in Madam Mitigation's house of pleasure comes to three thousand *dolours,* or woes a year. Lucio tops the second gentleman's financial estimate with one French crown—not the gold piece, but the slang term for the wreath of syphilitic buboes that were a commonly identified symptom of syphilis. With the poxy cost of Lucio's debauchery clarified, the First Gentleman then turns to Mistress Overdone, and asks her of the poxy cost of her business on her body by enquiring about her sciatica, a common euphemism for syphilitic joint pain. The corrosive relationship between

[93] Farnham, 50.

debauchery and the pox is further reiterated at the end of the play, when Lucio is forced to marry the diseased prostitute who he has impregnated (5.1.506-522). Nevertheless, Farnham completely ignored this whole darker side of the theme of pockified debauchery in the play.

Baum, Dessen, and Farnham could all have strengthened their arguments, just as Horsman and Melchiori could have made better critical editions, by examining the role of syphilis in the plays. In their avoidance of syphilis, these scholars are representative of the greater portion of the literary critics. Most scholars ignore even the very presence of syphilis, let alone the extensive metaphorical force of the disease in early modern literature. The twentieth century's advances in medical knowledge, such as antibiotics, which now cure syphilis, and the emergence of modern hospitals, have effectively isolated chronically ill patients from the general population. Most people are no longer confronted with victims of disfiguring and debilitating disease—certainly not on a daily basis: the subject is now out of sight and out of mind. In the Renaissance, chronic, disfiguring disease and epidemic illness were very much a part of life, and early modern authors expected their audience to know syphilis and its symptoms well enough to identify syphilitics merely from euphemistic allusions to their symptoms. Now, most readers have probably never seen a victim of syphilis in the grips of the contagion. Nevertheless, syphilis, as a sexually transmitted disease, has retained an aura of fear and disgust, and it has continued to elicit moral connotations.

Before the late twentieth century, medical tracts were the only works to broach the decorum barrier. Even in this there is a paradox. Victorian doctors write about syphilis in Shakespeare in order to legitimize their work, while Victorian literary critics silenced Shakespeare's poxy language to disguise the Bard's knowledge of a

shameful disease. However, literary critics are only beginning to recognize the pox as one of the most powerful early modern metaphors not only in a few plays but across the spectrum of late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and as a result, this vital key to understanding the texts has been overlooked.

Whatever Horsman and Melchiori's motives may have been, the end result is that their avoidance of the syphilitic references in *Bartholomew Fair*, and *2 Henry IV* prove detrimental to an understanding of the plays, or as Knowles says "even silence about bawdy has its cost, in limiting understanding."[94] Now that this silence has begun to be broken, there is a great deal to learned about formerly taboo subjects. I hope to increase understanding of the importance of syphilis in late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama by focusing on interpreting the pox metaphor from its inception in the late fifteenth century to its maturity in the early seventeenth century. In the last decade, critics have begun to cultivate an understanding of the pox in early modern literature, but there is much more to be said. By tracing the history of the metaphor across the sixteenth century, I intend to examine the pox, not like a doctor or historian, but as a literary critic, reading poxy texts and searching not for historical cases studies but for how syphilis functions in the language of the age. The pox metaphor is not merely a record of syphilis infection or a simple image of corruption but, as I hope to prove, a vital window into early modern body-centered perceptions of self, others, systems and language.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries were both fascinated with and surrounded by corruption. Early modern convention held that the age was decayed—that it had degenerated from an ancient, mythic past conceptualized in terms of pagan and prelapsarian elements. Humankind was viewed as both morally and physically

[94] Knowles, 20.

corrupted. As a result, the corruptibility of bodies, of language and of all worldly things is a common theme. The relation of corruption in the world and early modern pox theory cannot be underestimated. John Donne sums up the early modern theory of what might be described as cumulative, chronological degradation in pockified terms: "time (which rots all, and makes botches poxe,/ And plodding on, must make a calfe an oxe)."[95] Just as creatures grow, just as time passes, corruption also develops, and seemingly innocent botches, or sores, worsen into syphilis. The pox comes to represent the degraded and corrupt state of the world. Early modern texts themselves are filled with real and imagined pox. The pox, as I will argue in the course of this thesis, is the early modern archetypal signifier of corruption, and it becomes conflated with excessive consumption. Wells and Taylor's assertion that Shakespeare's texts have been hopelessly corrupted from their original form by editors and compisitors is complemented by corruption in the texts. Late Elizabethan and early Jacobean playwrights, and especially Shakespeare, played with the idea of poxy corruption by attributing syphilitic signs and symptoms to a discursive structure far removed from the disease itself. This process began quite early with simple pox concerns, developed with the finely tuned satire of Erasmus, Rabelais and the University Wits, and came to fruition in the complexities of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.

[95] John Donne, "Satyre II," *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 8.

Chapter 2

From Myth to Metaphor: The New Disease 1493-1530

> Plague had been the great "new disease" of the Middle Ages; in the Renaissance it was the pox.[1]
>
> Metaphors and myths [...] kill.[2]

At the end of the fifteenth century, early modern writers began to create a dizzying array of signifiers for syphilis and its treatment. The profusion of poxy words reflects a morbid fascination with the disease. According to Gordon Williams, the pox, like cuckoldry, was an object of great concern in the early modern consciousness:

> The two great obsessions of the time were pox and cuckoldry. The former, product and symbol of expanding horizons, quickly generated a vocabulary of its own; the latter, in a paranoid form, arrived from southern Europe with an already developed imagery.[3]

Long after the new disease had become the all-too-familiar "pox," syphilis metaphors continued to be associated with exploration, fear and obsession. Margaret Healy broadened the scholarly discussion on syphilis from the profusion of pox words to the "the function of names and myths" in the pocky body.[4] This is to say, that Healy changed the critical focus from the naming of syphilis in early modern texts, to an exploration of poxy myth-making and its dramatic value in Jacobean theatre.

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[1] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 124.
[2] Susan Sontag, "AIDS and Its Metaphors," *Illness and Its Metaphors and AIDS and Its Metaphors,* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 99.
[3] Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature,* vol. 1 (London: Athlone, 1994), xiv.
[4] Healy, *Fictions,* 130-134.

The driving force behind Healy's conception of early modern pox was Sander Gilman's psychological theory for interpreting disease myths. Gilman attempted to explain the psychological need for disease origin myths. He argued that "the fear of collapse, the sense of dissolution, which 'contaminates the western image of all disease'" was projected "onto the world, creating myths and fictions in which we find comfort."[5] According to Gilman, both Western disease naming and myth-making involved the creation of a space—via fiction—which somewhat removed partakers in the myth from this "fear of dissolution." Healy applied this concept to New World pox myths to explain

> The Columbian transaction theory—that Europeans contracted the new disease from the New World Indians [...] Citing the New World and its natives as the polluting source [...] certainly enabled Europeans to disentangle themselves a little further from the stigma and blame of it being "their" infection or poison.[6]

Naming and myth-making also provide this space within Europe through the creation of a European "other"—a French disease, a Neapolitan bone-ache, a Spanish pox—which identified an external cause and source for the affliction. In short, poxy naming and myth-making represented analogous attempts to displace blame and diminish the fear associated with this new affliction.

Poxy naming and myth-making were the first steps in the development of the pox metaphor. Names and myths established a mode of understanding for discussing the pox and integrating it into a larger cultural understanding. The process was brought to its zenith—perhaps after its sociological function had been met—in Girolamo Fracastoro's brilliant but flawed *Syphilis Sive Morbus Gallicus*. In *Syphilis,* Fracastoro shifted from the ontic model of early modern myth-making, to an

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[5] Sander Gilman, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1-6, quoted in Healy, *Fictions,* 134.
[6] Healy, 133-134.

ontological model.[7] By this I mean, that he abandoned mythopoeia as a primary response to questions arising about the new disease in favor of myth as a philosophical or literary format. Fracastoro's poxy mythopoeia was not an act of displacement or explanation, but rather a discursive model—a convention, if you will—which he used as the stylistic framework for imparting medical information about the disease and its most popular cures. The great flaw of *Syphilis* is Fracastoro's use of multiple, contradictory origin myths, but if one reads these myths not as a factual attempt to reconstruct the origin of the disease, but as an art form, then the contradictions, though they remain somewhat unsatisfactory, make sense. In treating pox origin myths as an artistic convention, he transcended mythopoeia as a physical response to medico-sociological poxy stimuli, and anticipated the metaphysical pox images of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean literature.

"The begynnynge of the Frenche pockes, and why it hath dyvers names"[8]

The naming of syphilis and the mythologizing of the disease's origins were the first step in the creation of the pox metaphor. The pox—as a sexual, and therefore, shameful, disease—proved to be a particularly apt example of Gilman's disease theory of displacement. The poxy profusion of names was the result of unique circumstances. First, syphilis was considered a new disease, and as such it required a name. The plurality of names attested, in part, to the rapidity with which the pox spread across Europe. When it first appeared at the siege of Naples in the army of the French king, Charles VIII, in 1493, the Italians called it the French pox or *Morbus Gallicus*, while the French, blaming the Italians, called it names such as the

[7] This reading is based on Heidegger's perception of the "worldhood," which involves cognitive approaches to perceiving the world. See Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), 46-59.

[8] Ulrich von Hutten, *De Morbo Gallico,* trans. Thomas Paynel (London, 1533), A1^{r}, EEBO, Internet, 17 June, 2004.

Neapolitan bone ache. This plurality of foreign epithets did not go unnoticed by contemporary authors. John Hester, in his dedicatory epistle with which he prefaced his translation of a Paracelsus-written pox treatise, made a postal pun of poxy xenophobic naming:

> Great curresie is made who shall carrie the name, the Frenchman posting it over to the Spaniard, the Spaniarde to the Neapolitan, and either of these returning it back to other, but I would we in England were not as deeply interested in the thing, as either of them are in the name, which because I feare we are, as knowing more herein then everie man knowes.[9]

Hester took an unusual viewpoint by arguing that rather than blaming foreign sources, Englishmen should look to their own infections and by implication, their actions and moral conduct. Both the origin myth and Hester's sentiment survived into the seventeenth century, when Simon Rowlands, with a pun, mentioned the "hot debate" about a "sweating thing, cald *Morbus Gallicus*" in which French, Italian, Spanish, English, Scots and Dutch argue over the nationalized names of the disease.[10]

In Western Europe, the pox assumed a number of names based on the profusion of perceptions concerning the origin of the disease. In addition to French and Neapolitan signifiers, the English also called syphilis the Dutch, Indian and Spanish pox.[11] Syphilis references addressed pockified conditions such as burnt; bitten; bone aches (syphilitic destruction of bones, joints and sinews); buboed; cankered; crinkle-hammed; dosed; fired; (be) jeweled, gemmed, or pearled; hoarseness; marbled; martyred; *noli me tangere*; peppered; pickled; piled or pildgarlic (referring to baldness); pocky; poulained, rheumy; rosy (for poxy sores were called

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[9] John Hester, Epistle Dedicatorie, *An Excellent Treatise Teaching Howe to Cure the French-Pockes* by Phillipus Hermanus [Paracelsus], (London: 1590), Q2^{v}.
[10] Samuel Rowlands, "The Knave of Spades," *More Knaves Yet?* (London: 1672), EEBO, internet, 3 November, 2004.
[11] Iwan Bloch points out that between 1495-1500 syphilis is labeled with more than four hundred names. Girolamo Fracastoro, *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus,* ed. and trans. Geoffrey Eatough (Liverpool: Francis Cairns 1984), 13.

roses), scabbed, scalded; snuffling, sodden; stewed, tettered or verrolled.[12] Pox metaphors were conflated with other human and livestock diseases, such as bots, consumption, grand gore, gout; haddams; leprosy, murrain, serpigo and sciatica, or with pox treatments or cosmetic corrections for pox-damaged bodies including: diets; gold, silver or copper noses; makeup; merkins (pubic hair wigs, sold at the Exchange);[13] patches (to conceal necrotic sores); wigs, and tubs (sweating tubs used in syphilis treatments). Not only was syphilis ornamented with a variety of signifiers, the disease itself was viewed as having a protean nature for its myriad of symptoms and an ability to engender other diseases. Ulrich von Hutten bore witness to the mutability of the pox: "some time the sicknes turneth it self into the gout, or into the palsey or into apoplexi or infecth many one with lepre, for it is thought that these infirmities be very neighbours one to an other."[14] The several manifestations of syphilis in conjunction with early modern confusion of the pox with other diseases, earned it the epithet: the universal scab.[15] The profusion of pox terms is both a sign of the times, and a testament to early modern peoples' lively interest in the disease.[16]

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[12] These terms are collected from Williams' *Dictionary.*

[13] Alopecia, a pox symptom which was not identified until the 1530s, caused the loss of all hair—hence, the seventeenth-century market for merkins. See Williams, *Dictionary,* vol. 2, 877.

[14] Von Hutten, *De Morbo,* B2^{v}.

[15] Fabricius, 24.

[16] Gordon Williams attributes the growth of bawdy and pocky terms to a number of reasons, which include:

> Foreign influences (the English language almost doubled itself due to foreign sources); early moderns brought a new complexity to the pervasiveness of human sexuality in language—of which the printing press played no small role, and finally, the Judeo-Christian tradition of sexual guilt, which fostered the creation of language "hedged in anxiety" resulting in two contrasting pressures: towards crudity and evasion. Yesterday's evasions become today's crudities—thus, creating a continuing a demand for fresh euphemisms.

Williams, *Dictionary,* vol. 1, vi.

The First Infection

Early in the sixteenth century, Thomas Paynel translated von Hutten's informative treatise, *De Morbo Gallico* into English. In it, von Hutten imparted a number of commonly-held assumptions about the pox that amount to conventional wisdom. He wrote: "it hath pleased god, that in our tyme sycknesse shuld aryse, whiche were to our forefathers (as may be wel conjectured) unknowne."[17] Most early pox writers believed that syphilis was a new disease. In the seventeenth century, Robert Burton would acknowledge that "Scorbutum, Smallpox, Plica, Sweating Sicknesse, Morbus Gallicus and c." were all diseases unknown to Galen.[18] While in *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus,* Girolamo Fracastoro also recognized that syphilis was new to his time:

> What were the varied accidents of matter, what the seeds which brought on an unaccustomed disease through long centuries seen by no one: which in our time raged throughout all of Europe, parts of Asia and through the cities of Africa: it burst into Italy with the unhappy French wars and took its name from that people.[19]

As Fracastoro pointed out, syphilis first appeared in Italy during the French wars, and immediately after it was recognized, people were attempting to blame the disease on others. The French wars, to which Fracastoro referred, are still believed to be the crucible of the first European pox epidemic. Von Hutten added some more historical facts to Fracastoro's reference:

> In the yere of 1493 or there about, this pestiferous evyll creped amongst the people, not only in Fraunce, but fyrst appered in Naples, in the Frenche-mennes hoste, (whereof it toke his name) whiche kept warre under the French kyng Charles, before hit appered in any other place.[20]

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[17] Von Hutten, *De Morbo,* A1[r].
[18] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1624), B1[r].
[19] Fracastoro, 40.
[20] Von Hutten, *De Morbo,* A1[r].

Von Hutten and Fracastoro's stories of the first outbreak of the pox have continued to be corroborated by modern medical historians:

> The appearance of syphilis was an epoch-making event, and doctors schooled in Galenic and Arabian medicine were ill-prepared for it. The disease struck in 1493. Cases were occurring throughout Western Europe when a major epidemic broke out in the army that the French King Charles VIII led against the Kingdom of Naples in 1494. Charles [...] led a cosmopolitan force of about 30,000 men, mostly mercenaries and including some from Spain; among the raggle–taggle group of civilians accompanying the army were hundreds of prostitutes. Naples was held by King Alphonso II with the help of Spanish mercenaries sent by Ferdinand and Isabella. At first Charles was successful and he captured Naples early in 1495 without difficulty, but this success was completely reversed when an Italian league was formed to eject the invaders. To make matters worse, prostitution and debauchery of both sides were followed by a widespread outbreak of the new disease. The Italian surgeon Marcellus Cumanus (*fl.* 1495), who was working in Naples, later claimed to have seen the earliest cases. Charles was forced to withdraw from Italy and discharge his soldiers, who spread the disease far and wide as they returned to their own countries. The King himself died of it in 1498.[21]

Syphilis would become the new disease of the Renaissance, in the same way that the Bubonic Plague had been the new affliction of the medieval period.[22] Early modern authors, after this first outbreak and during the rapid spread of the syphilis epidemic throughout Europe, sought to integrate syphilis into early modern peoples' understanding of the world by naming this new disease and by creating and retelling stories of its origin. The concept of newness in relation to syphilis was of primary concern to authors of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and often syphilis

[21] J.D. Oriel, *The Scars of Venus* (London: Springer-Verlag, 1994), 11.

[22] The English Sweat is the other new disease of the Renaissance. This disease has never been satisfactorily identified, but it was apparently a virulent strain of something like influenza. Also the English Sweat, while far more deadly, never gained the metaphorical resonance of Syphilis because it never had the moral-sexual implications of the pox; furthermore, it occurred in isolated incidents and was possibly one of those diseases that acted so quickly and with such a high mortality rate that in effect, it contained itself.

myths attempted to alleviate the anxiety related to a fear of the unknown by grounding peoples' knowledge of the disease within existing schemata that was based on religious, astrological and xenophobic conventions. The elements of this naming, and of these tales—fear, shame, sex and divine wrath—lend themselves to the birth and future vitality of the pox metaphor.

Myth Theory

The very instability of the age lent itself to the creation of myths—the Age of Discovery, both geographic and scientific, was bound to generate new encounters and create questions which people could not answer by referring to ancient texts. It is this very sort of ferment that promoted the creation of pox myths:

> Myth should be seen as a prologue to discourse; discourse can be viewed as reasoned elaboration of the values found in myth. Where myth no longer generates discourse, it becomes the static repetition of dogma; where discourse fails to avail itself of myth and fable, it loses the chance to regenerate itself, and severs the tie to the community. In the end, true art, true myth, is moral, transvaluative, not because it intends to teach its audience a lesson, but because it should engender evaluation.[23]

James Liszká's definition of myth as "a prologue to discourse" is particularly apt in the case of syphilis. The early modern process of naming and mythologizing the disease was the first stage of what became a great and varied discussion. In an immediate sense, pox myths were the ontic form by which late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century authors conceptualized the disease. Through the use of mythic structure, authors found a means a means of beginning a discussion. Pox myths answer—albeit somewhat fantastically—the most basic questions: where did it come from, how was it caused, what does it do, and how can it be cured? Through myth,

[23] James Jakób Liszká, *The Semiotic of Myth* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989), 219.

syphilis first appears in English and European literature, and these texts represent an early discursive response to the threats and challenges that the pox presented to early modern society.

Pox myths reveal the process in which syphilis infected the social consciousness of the West. In order to explore what early modern pox myths mean, one must first define myth and explore its discursive role in the early sixteenth century. Mircea Eliade attempted to define myth from a modern standpoint:

> What exactly is a myth? In the language current during the nineteenth century, a "myth" meant anything opposed to "reality": the creation of Adam, or the invisible man, no less than the history of the world as described by the Zulus, or the *Theogony* of Hesiod—these were all "myths". Like many another cliché of the Enlightenment and of Positivism, this, too, was of Christian origin and structure; for, according to primitive Christianity, everything which could not be justified by reference to one or the other of the two Testaments was untrue; it was a "fable."[24]

Eliade's definition of myth from a nineteenth-century perspective can only partially be applied to the early modern era. Early modern truth was defined by the Bible; however, the Renaissance intellectual emphasis on classical learning and literature dictated that scientific and medical discourse be ornamented with classical allusions. As a result, early modern authors offered several strikingly disparate explanations for the rise of the pox which they discussed in a framework composed of different classical myths and allusions. While the disease was almost universally associated with a punishment from God, petulant classical gods, conjunctions of planets, poisonous mists or seeds, sexual abomination or the duplicity or abominations of ethnic groups are also common images in pox origin myths. Furthermore, most early texts combine several of these poxy origin myths: for example, God, angered by

[24] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality,* trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1970), 24.

foreign sexual abominations, manipulated the heavenly spheres causing a poisonous mist to arise, which infected hapless victims with the pox. In any case, these Renaissance myths constituted an effort on the parts of the authors, to contextualize the disease within early modern culture by coupling information about syphilis with answers to the fundamental questions that a victim of a new disease might have asked.

"For the leprosie and this disease are so neere of kinne that they are Cosen-Germanes to each other:" Pox, Leprosy and the Plague[25]

The traditional cultural associations of leprosy and the plague had a profound influence on early modern perceptions of syphilis. From the outset, the pox was associated with leprosy, and the two were often confused or conflated, such as in Robert Copland's epithet that the pox was "some countrefayt lepry."[26] Several skin diseases including syphilis, leprosy and lesser afflictions such as scabies were often confused; however, the pox was most often conflated with leprosy and its ancient Judeo-Christian cultural connotations with sin and uncleanliness: "leprosy, with which syphilis was often confused, provided writers with a ready-made ensemble of etiological explanations and symbolic associations for the new disease."[27] Leprosy was the most important influence in the development of the pox metaphor. The plague was not a substantial influence on the pox metaphor itself; however, there are many similarities between the pox and plague origin myths since both afflictions were considered to be new diseases in their time.[28]

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[25] Paracelsus was one of the early modern medical experts who compared leprosy to the pox. See Hermanus, *French-Pockes,* A1^{r}, EEBO, Internet, 31 October 2004.

[26] Robert Copland, *The Hye Way to the Spyttell Hous* (London, 1536), B2^{r}, EEBO, Internet, 23 June, 2004.

[27] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27.

[28] The Bubonic plague was probably not a new disease when it appeared in Europe in the fourteenth century. There is evidence of previous outbreaks in classical Athens and more recently, in sixth

Perhaps nowhere was the connection between early perceptions of pox and leprosy more apparent than in Scots poet Robert Henryson's "perceptive handling of a heroine's fall and leprous fate" *Testament of Cresseid.*[29] Peter Richards correctly assumed that the poem's "feeling for the tragedy of the disease" suggested that Henryson "had first-hand knowledge" of leprosy.[30] Richards' assumption seems probable, since Henryson, a schoolmaster, was attached to Dunfermline abbey, which had a leper hospital during the fifteenth century. Moreover, "Testament of Cresseid," which was written *circa* 1485, directly prefigured images of poxy physical destruction as a punishment for sexual immorality.

Henryson picked up the Troilus and Cresseid story where Chaucer left off, finding Cresseid cast off by Diomeid:

> Quhen Diomeid had all his appetite,
> And Mair, fulfillit of this fair ladie,
> Upon ane uther he set his haill delyte,
> And send to hir ane lybell of repudie
> And hir excludit fra his companie" (11.71-75).

After Diomeid sends this legalistic declaration of his rejection of Cresseid, "ane lybell of repudie," she becomes, according to rumor, a common prostitute: "Than desolait scho walkit up and doun./ And sum men sayis into the court commoun" (11.76-77). Cresseid blames her fate, not on Diomeid or her own actions but on Venus and Cupid.

In anger, she blasphemes Venus and Cupid for their inconstancy. Cresseid is punished for her impudence after a dramatized trial held by a court of Roman gods: "Saturne and the Mone," who are appointed to be her judges, decreed that she be "torment sair with seiknes incurabil,/ and to all lovers be abhominabill" (44.307-

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century Constantinople; however, enough time had passed that the plague had largely been forgotten and therefore, was viewed as a new disease.

[29] Peter Richards, *The Medieval Leper* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1978), 6.

[30] Richards, 6.

308).[31] The gods, who are identified as planetary conceptions, make their wrath known in an astrological description through which: "Henryson, exploiting concepts from the pseudo-science of astrology that he did not himself approve of, gives his story a visualized supra-human dimension."[32] Saturn takes her beauty:

> Thy greit fairness and all they bewtie gay,
> Thy wantoun blude, and eik thy goldin hair,
> Heir I exclude fra the for evermair. (45.313-315)

He also changes her "mirth into melancholy" and her "play and wantones/ To great diseis" (46.316, 319-320). After she is cursed, Calchas takes her to live in the leper colony outside of the town where, one day, Troylus sees the afflicted Cresseid and though he does not recognize her, he generously gives her and the other lepers a gift of great riches. In doing so, he proves his goodness and finally makes Cresseid realize the error of her ways:

> My mynd in fleschelie foull affectiounm
> Was inclynit to lustis lecherous
> Fy fals Cresseid! O trew knicht Troylus!" (78.558-560)

Henryson was a didactic writer who struggled with "what kind of truth there can be in fictions," and his solution was to use stories to "serve explicit moral purposes."[33] In the case of *Testament*, Cresseid's fate for infidelity is ostensibly the god-given curse of leprosy; however, her punishment is very much linked to sexual immorality: not only was she unfaithful to Troylus, but she seems to have become a prostitute. Cresseid's leprous punishment is a disease that is often termed venereal leprosy. There is no scientific evidence for venereal leprosy, but it appears to have been a medieval belief that leprosy could be transmitted sexually. Proponents of the theory that syphilis was in pre-Columbian Europe suggest that venereal leprosy is

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[31] *Testament of Cresseid* quotations are from Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy, eds., *Selected Poems of Henryson and Dunbar,* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992).
[32] Matthew P. McDiarmid, *Robert Henryson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981), 89.
[33] Bawcutt and Riddy, introduction, *Henryson and Dunbar,* xi.

syphilis.[34] Furthermore, leprosy, sexuality and ungodly practices associated with venereal leprosy were integrated into poxy origin myths, such as Pietro Mainardi's 1525 supposition that syphilis was created by the abomination of a Spanish soldier having intercourse with a leprous prostitute—an event that Margaret Healy described as "a symbolic monstrous birth."[35] In this instance leprosy and abomination actually engender the pox. Cresseid's venereal leprosy is contrived: she is afflicted not because of her wantonness but as a punishment from the gods for blasphemy. Nevertheless, the association between leprosy and pox is established. Leprosy, the unclean disease of Leviticus, was considered a curse for unclean behavior, and syphilis with its overtly sexual—and therefore, sinful—connotations appropriated leprosy's ancient metaphorical power thus becoming what was often described as the New Leprosy.

If the pox gained much of its metaphorical force from leprosy, it shared many aspects of its origin myths with Europe's other great new disease, the plague. Many of the pox myths borrowed from a tradition of blaming new diseases on astrological conjunctions, an angry God, foreigners and minority ethnic groups. This tradition was best exemplified by the earlier plague myths. Like the pox, the advent of the Bubonic plague in fourteenth-century Europe had also been blamed on the stars. One such claim was made by Guy de Chauliac, a papal physician, who "thought the trouble had begun with a grand conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the sign of Aquarius in 1345."[36] Nor was it unusual that the plague should be viewed as a celestial curse; the damage it wreaked was so momentous that some, such as the

[34] There is a credible argument that venereal leprosy is Pre-Columbian syphilis. Furthermore, Peter Richards has discovered evidence that early moderns confused leprosy and syphilis when he uncovered syphilitic bones buried in lepers graveyards; however, it must be said syphilis-damaged bones do not appear before 1500. Richards, 119-120.
[35] Pietro Mainardi, *Epistola II and Michaelem Sanctannam* (1525), cited in Healy, *Fictions,* 133.
[36] Geddes Smith, *Plague on Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), 4.

chroniclers of Padua, found the plague to be a: "devastation more final than Noah's flood—when God had left *some* people alive to continue the human race."[37] This sort of sentiment about the plague was both common and justified: the plague "wiped out about a fourth of Europe's population in just four years—a tidal wave of death almost unimaginable today."[38] The plague was so horrible that, to early chroniclers, it could only have been a curse from God.

The Genoese, who had massacred Byzantine colonists in the Black Sea region, were thought to have invited God's displeasure. On the basis of this massacre, some theologians decided that though Greek Orthodox, the Byzantines were still Christian, and the plague was God's punishment for this same-faith atrocity; however, others believed that the plague was punishment for general sinfulness. Gabriele de Mussis, a Piacenzan lawyer in the second half of the fourteenth century, combined the punishment theory with astrological causes to create a colorful image of the genesis of the plague:

> The quivering spear of the Almighty was aimed everywhere and infected the whole human race with its pitiless wounds. Orion, that cruel star, and the tail of the dragon and the angel hurling vials of poison into the sea, and the appalling weather of Saturn were given leave to harm land and sea, men and trees; advancing from east to west with plague bearing steps they poured out the poisoned vessels through the countries of the world.[39]

De Mussis' imagery was a composite of astrological and religious-apocalyptic sources. God initiates the action by loosing supernatural forces to wreak havoc upon the earth. The angel with the poison—or plaguey—vial is based upon the seven angels and seven vials full of the wrath of God in the Apocalypse. De Mussis

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[37] Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 1.
[38] Rick Weis, "War on Disease," *National Geographic* (February 2002), 13.
[39] Gabriele de Mussis, "Historia de Morbo," *The Black Death,* Rosemary Horrox, trans. and ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 16.

augmented his apocalyptic imagery with malevolent astrological forces such as Saturn and Orion.[40]

Like De Mussis' plague angel, his human plague agents, the Tartars, also come from the east. De Mussis' account was perhaps the most popular explanation for the genesis of the plague. According to de Mussis, the plague entered Europe in the latter years of the 1340s in a most dramatic fashion: the Italians contracted Bubonic Plague from their Tartar adversaries in the Crimea. The Tartars, who were besieging an Italian trading colony, were decimated by the plague, and the outbreak was so deadly that the survivors were forced to withdraw, but as de Mussis reported, they were not the sort to exit gracefully:

> The dying Tartars, stunned and stupefied by the immensity of the disaster brought about by the disease, and realizing that they had no hope of escape, lost interest in the siege. But they ordered corpses to be placed in catapults and lobbed into the city in the hope that the intolerable stench would kill everyone inside. What seemed like mountains of dead were thrown into the city, and the Christians could not hide or flee to escape from them, although they dumped as many of the bodies as they could in the sea. And soon the rotting corpses tainted the air and poisoned the water supply, and the stench was so overwhelming that hardly one in several thousand was in a position to flee the remains of the Tartar army.[41]

This account of the Tartars flinging plague-ridden bodies down upon the Genoese Christians is possibly apocryphal; the very same accusation is made by Thucydides when Athens was besieged almost two thousand years before.[42] Questions of historical veracity aside, the account continues: the Tartars were never able to cut the Italians off from the sea, and Genoese merchants fleeing from their Black Sea trading

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[40] Horrox, 16.
[41] de Mussis, 15.
[42] Thucydides claims that this plague appeared in Athens in 430 B.C. This plague, which carried off Pericles, was also said to come from the east. Victims were said to exhibit "hoarseness, bleeding at the throat [...] convulsion and internal pains," as well as ulcers, high fever and death. Cyril E. Robinson, *A History of Greece* (London: Methuen, 1929), 190-191.

posts brought the plague to Constantinople, Genoa and Venice. While there is no proof that the Tartars practiced this form of germ warfare, what de Mussis' account provides is a cause: the plague came from a conjunction of planets; a vector: the plaguey Tartar bodies, and a source: the East.

Plague myths certainly shaped poxy origin myths. In *Syphilis,* Fracastoro revealed that he was aware of de Mussis' plague origin myth:

> Two hundred years have flowed since, as Mars combined his fiery light with gloomy Saturn, an unaccustomed fever blazed forth through all the peoples of the Orient, through all the plains watered by the Ganges, which after causing bloody sputum to be expelled from gasping lungs (a pitiful sight), reaching its climax on the fourth day destroyed its victims with a bitter death. That same fever attacked the peoples of Assyria and Persia, those who drink of the Euphrates and Tigris, and, a little while after, the rich Arabs and dissolute Canopus: then it infected the Phrygians, then crossing the sea to unhappy Italy, and it raged all over Europe.[43]

Fracastoro is poetically paraphrasing de Mussis' account. His Phrygians are, in classical historiography, not a particular ethnicity but rather, the Greco-Roman designation for wild barbarian tribes that inhabited the Black Sea region: in other words, de Mussis' Tartars.

Joseph Grünpeck and the First Pox Text

The first book on the pox was written by Joseph Grünpeck in 1496, only one year after the initial outbreak of the new disease. Grünpeck was a young astrologer and peripatetic priest from Burghausen attached to the court of Maximilian I the Holy Roman Emperor. He, like von Hutten, was a victim of the disease, and he wrote about his experiences in a Latin poem entitled, *Treatise on the French Evil.*[44] The

[43] Fracastoro, 47, 49.
[44] Oriel, 13.

editors, Merrill Moore and Henry Solomon, found Grünpeck's writing very much in the manner of his time:

> In his literary style Grünpeck has a mannerism common to many writers in the period near the end of the Middle Ages, which was to mix pagan mythology and Christian dogma in a charmingly irresponsible way. However, after having devoted the first eight chapters to religious-astrological theories, apparently for the purpose of meeting the standards and scientific traditions of his period, in Chapter 9, Grünpeck suddenly changes his attitude as he is metamorphosed from a religionist and astrologer into an observer of fact. His sentences in Chapter 9 contain shrewd and practical advice which he formulates with lapidary-like precision.[45]

Grünpeck, like many of his contemporaries, mixed poetry, mythology and Christianity in his description of syphilis. What More and Solomon saw as a charmingly irresponsible delivery was actually a discursive mode dictated by literary convention. Grünpeck employed a myth-based means of expression that borrowed from plague discourse and prefigured Fracastoro's *Syphilis* in both style and content. Grünpeck made astute factual observations about the disease, but he also had certain political and religious themes. In the introduction, Grünpeck stated his aims:

> I intend to tell you about this sickness, its origin, its true symptoms and causes, all prescribed hereby in my treatise, and also about other cases which are multiplying in these years. Also, I tell about verified and true medicines to drive out the French Evil.[46]

Grünpeck's statement of purpose espoused both medical and conceptual ends. He tells the reader that he is writing a medical tract; however, he achieves his ends by creating a montage of political, religious and astrological theories.

According to Grünpeck, the essential cause of syphilis was discord. He believed that new diseases were proliferating and that they were an indicator of a

[45] Joseph Grünpeck, *Treatise on the French Evil,* trans. Merrill Moore and Harry C. Solomon (London: British Medical Association, 1935), 2.
[46] Grünpeck, 4.

disjunction from the natural order. It is likely that the other new diseases to which he referred were the plague and the English sweat. In mentioning the other new diseases, Grünpeck was contextualizing syphilis in a history of divine punishment of human disobedience that was the result of God's anger at his peoples' political rebelliousness. Grünpeck imagined a harmonious Europe to be a Roman Empire including France and Italy under a German Caesar (see Fig. 1). Unfortunately, the Italians were "zealously anxious to cut off the Head which the Germans elected" and that "it hardly pleases the French to have an emperor" either.[47] This evil willfulness in which "every nation draws itself away from the yoke" resulted in trouble since it upset the natural, divinely-inspired harmony and aroused God's visible signs of displeasure: "no time and no era before has suffered this trouble heretofore, as now we see many things upset one after the other."[48] God's displeasure can be read in the astrological events which, in turn, instigate hardship on earth.

While the impetus of the disease originated with God's will and man's willfulness, Grünpeck found that the action that physically gave rise to the disease was a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter four minutes after noon on the 25th of November of 1484—an event which was further enflamed by a solar eclipse and another great conjunction the following year (see Fig. 2). Grünpeck supported his astrological statement with a mathematically precise astronomical observation: thus science, logic, and precision were used to support a theory grounded in myth and tradition. From these events, Grünpeck deduced that:

> The French Evil [...] happened thus, for it has been found that Jupiter, which is a hot and moist planet rules over France. But life and strength are in warmth and in natural dampness, as the masters of natural science prove. Therefore, the French are fit by nature, but they fall more easily

[47] Grünpeck, 5.
[48] Grünpeck, 5.

> into such sicknesses, for their bodies are subject to greater harm than others, because they have more blood and more moisture and are more saturated, which moistness and saturation are more prone to rotting, and can sooner be broken up.[49]

Therefore, it was natural that the French were the first victims because Grünpeck considered them humorally susceptible to this sort of disease, since they were thought to be a moist people who are prone to rot.[50] Grünpeck discovered not only the source of the disease in God's wrath and the cause of the contagion in the conjunction of planets but an explanation for the most popular contemporary name of the disease: at the time and for the next two centuries the most common name for syphilis was *morbus gallicus*, or the French disease.[51]

After describing the predisposition of the Gallic people for the disease, Grünpeck described the humoral cause of the disease in greater depth:

> These humours (melancholy and cholera) come therefore so out of their workings and nature, that it becomes such a vile, stinking, and poisonous matter that it is not to be compared to leprosy, for leprosy, in comparison, is much more easily to be endured. The smell comes from the uncleanliness of Saturn... the great heat comes from Mars, which is a planet of kindling, for the pox tortures people so, that many wish for death; there one sees the other cause, that the sickness comes not only from the evil moisture, melancholy but also mixes with melancholy that comes from the inflamed humor called cholera. The third cause appears in the broken-up blood, for black, stinking blood runs out. Nature works to drive out these matters and beats them down to the genital region or the parts of shame.[52]

In describing pox humors, Grünpeck humorally differentiated syphilis from leprosy—

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[49] Grünpeck, 20.
[50] Syphilis is often related to rotting presumably because of the foul odor that victims are said to exude both from their breath and sores.
[51] Grünpeck's humoral explanation for the French disease is somewhat unusual. The disease is usually attributed to the French because, as von Hutten explained, it first appeared in Charles VIII's army. Later in the century, the French and the French pox are conflated, and the French are viewed as decadent and perverse. Von Hutten, *De Morbo,* A1^{v}.
[52] Grünpeck, 21-22.

this was a major point since many thought that the diseases were related.[53] In the case of the pox, the planets aroused the choleric and melancholic humors within the body and the excess of these humors caused the illness. At this point, Grünpeck avoided the sexual source of syphilis. His diagnosis was situational rather than casual: in this instance, the planets caused the disease and nature forced this abomination to be hidden in the genital region. Nevertheless, when he was making scientific observations, he revealed an awareness of the venereal causality of the disease by warning male readers to "keep away from women, because this sickness is easily aroused by that" thus revealing that he has realized that sex or sexuality at the least, played a role in the spread of the disease.[54]

Grünpeck's idea that the French were predisposed to syphilis would have been supported by early modern Galenic medical theory, which found that the source of illness, and even behavior, depended on the four bodily humors. Syphilis was thought to be caused by an excess of the sanguine humor that coincidentally also instigated lecherous behavior. As a result, it was believed that in succumbing to one's lecherous sanguine imbalance resulted in syphilitic suffering and death. To Renaissance-era moralists, the poetic justice would have it that the sin of lust brought about a reciprocal, venereal punishment as opposed to the random destruction of the plague. The philosophy that sins had reciprocal, disease punishments was common in the Renaissance, and diseases were linked with certain behaviors. Gout was considered the disease of the glutton, while dropsy, to a lesser extent, was the correlative disease of the alcoholic; similarly, syphilis was the product of lechery. Gout was especially

[53] Venereal leprosy was treated with Saracen ointment (a mercury ointment that Europeans learned about from the Arabs during the Crusades). In an argument for venereal leprosy being just another name for pre-Columbian syphilis, mercury does nothing to cure leprosy; however, it was the only effective treatment for the pox until the discovery of salvarsan (an arsenic derivative) in the nineteenth century.

[54] Grünpeck, 25.

linked to syphilis as a result of their common cause—excessive appetite.[55]

Some Other Pox Myths

Grünpeck's poxy origin myth was not singular. Many early modern texts reflect strong emotions of shock, dismay, fear and disgust in myths of pox creation or origin. Rumors were rampant as to the origin, cause and transmission of syphilis. These developed into virtual myths of creation and origin, and the hysteria regarding the disease has remained apparent in these stories. Early accounts often included political or social agendas that fix blame for the disease on a particular group. Winfried Schleiner has collected a number of early pox references that reflect the obvious misogynistic strain of several pox origin myths.[56] As Schleiner followed the history of this misogynistic thread, he uncovered the common belief that the disease can arise from women, almost spontaneously, through excessive heat of the vulva or through the mixing of many men's seed in one woman, which caused the womb to ferment.[57] This second means could even happen when a virgin had intercourse with many non-infected men. In other words, the pox was not viewed as an external infection but internal corruption, from which Schleiner concluded that "the woman's body becomes the locus of corruption, for which she would also be primarily responsible, and the vehicle of infection of others."[58] Like some modern cultures'

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[55] Shakespeare reveals the overlap of meaning in Falstaff's utterance, "A pox of this gout, or a gout of this pox" (*2 Henry IV,* 1.2.238). Gordon Williams recognizes the relationship between the diseases in his definition of *haut-gout*, which he contends is a term that was used to describe syphilis, specifically in terms of an upper class victim. This definition is also particularly telling because it reveals not only a stratification of syphilis terms in relation to the social standing of its victims (i.e.—a prostitute is crudely labeled as poxed, burned, scalded, etc., while an aristocratic gentleman might have the more innocuous sounding, haut-gout), but also of the hierarchy of disease. Gout was assumed to result from gluttony, as syphilis was thought to arise from excessive sexual desire—whether or not it was even satisfied. The fact that one might mask their syphilis behind the term haut-gout reveals a hierarchy of disease and even sin. Williams, *Dictionary,* 612.

[56] Winfried Schleiner, "Infection and cure through women: Renaissance constructions of syphilis," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies,* 24:3 (1994), 502.

[57] Schleiner, 503, 505.

[58] Schleiner, 506.

beliefs on AIDS, not only were women considered the vectors, but they could, to their detriment, be viewed as a cure: "sexual intercourse with a virgin could cure an infected male of syphilis."[59] It was not recognized that venereal disease affected men and women equally until Giovanni Batista Sitoni's book, *Miscellanea Medico-Curiosa,* was published in 1677.[60]

"He is Certainly Outstandingly Good at Inventing Myths:" Fracastoro's Several Pox Origin Myths[61]

Syphilis is so similar to *The French Evil* in its basic structure and content that it seems likely that Fracastoro was familiar with Grünpeck's work. Fracastoro, however, was just beginning where Grünpeck finished. While Grünpeck's work is a first impression of the pox, *Syphilis* offers the reader a far more comprehensive view of the disease. Although begun decades before, *Syphilis* was not published until 1530.[62] As a result, Grünpeck's 1496 publication of *French Evil* is much more of a first response to the pox as compared to Fracastoro's account. Fracastoro used a myth-inspired form of discourse that is structurally similar to *French Evil* but from a very different viewpoint. *Syphilis* was intended to be a literary work. It was a success: translated into six languages and reprinted in over one hundred editions, *Syphilis* may well be considered "the most famous Renaissance Latin poem; not only does the work lend its name to the new disease, it is also renowned for its literary merit."[63] Where *French Evil* was dedicated to answering immediate questions about how, where and why syphilis appeared in Europe, the myths in *Syphilis* are of a

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[59] Schleiner, 507.
[60] Schleiner, 510.
[61] Lilio Gregorio Giraldo, "First Dialogue," *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus,* ed. Eatough, 211.
[62] Eatough believes that *Syphilis* "took shape between 1510 and 1512." A pirated copy was printed in 1522 and the first two books were published in 1526, before it was published in it entirety in 1530. Eatough, 21.
[63] Eatough, 1.

literary nature—a discursive model which Fracastoro uses as a conventional way of opening a dialogue with the reader to add his own comments about the pox to the early sixteenth-century discussion on the disease. Grünpeck's ontic response is replaced by Fracastoro's ontological format in which myth serves the discursive framework for a detailed explanation of the mercury and guaiacum treatments.

Syphilis was Fracastoro's first major work, and although he was middle-aged when it was published, he had already established himself as a remarkable individual. Having been made a lecturer in logic in 1501 and *concilarius anatmocius* by 1502 for the University of Padua, in 1505 he was elected to the College of Physicians at Verona.[64] After the poem's publication, Fracastoro was hailed as "the greatest Latin poet of his age, an equal of Virgil."[65] The disease, syphilis, would later take its name from Fracastoro's shepherd who is the protagonist in the Book III syphilis myth.[66]

Fracastoro began his work with a discussion of poxy symptoms. In Book I of *Syphilis*, he found that the pox has a long incubation of "four lunar cycles" before sufficiently clear symptoms were manifested; that victims suffered from lethargy, and caries appeared around or on the genitals. As the disease progressed, joints, arms, shoulder blades and calves were "tormented by intolerable pains." [67] Sores also appeared all over the body and face and could develop into abscesses, sometimes so deep that they would expose bones. Fracastoro also observed that the pox attacked the bones as well, making them "rough with scales."[68] Simultaneously, the disease destroyed mucus membranes, leaving victims with "mouths eaten away (which) yawn

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[64] Eatough, 1.
[65] Eatough, 1.
[66] The term syphilis, however, does not come into regular usage within the English lexicon until after Nahum Tate published the first English translation of *Syphilis* at the end of the seventeenth century. Girolamo Fracastoro, *Syphilis, or A Poetical History of the French Disease,* trans. Nahum Tate (London: 1686). According to the *OED* however it is not used to describe syphilis, the disease, until 1718.
[67] Fracastoro, 55.
[68] Fracastoro, 55.

open in a hideous gape while the throat produced feeble sounds," a term which he called "the snuffle."[69] Syphilis attacked the eyes and ate away the nose; the victims suffered from scabs, pustules, and insomnia. In addition to identifying the symptoms, Fracastoro cleverly warned against spreading the disease by admonishing victims to: "keep away from Venus, and above all things avoid the soft pleasures of love-making—nothing is more harmful. Beautiful Venus herself hates the contagion, the young girls hate it."[70] While Fracastoro's several myths overtly link the pox to blasphemy, much like Cresseid's venereal leprosy, he drops some hints that he was aware of the venereal nature of syphilis.

A Rationalized Myth

In Book I of *Syphilis,* Fracastoro attempted to avoid giving credence to the popular theory that syphilis was a New World disease. The New World argument first appeared in print four years before the publication of *Syphilis,* in Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes' *Oviedo de la Natural Historia de las Indias*, and it was later supported by Rodrigo Diaz de Isla's *Travtado Cõtra el Mal Serpentino: Que Vulgaremente en España el Ilamado Buba g fure Ordenado en el Ospital de Todos los Santos d'Lisbona* of 1539.[71] The theory itself can probably be traced as far back to 1517, when Leonard Schmaus advocated guaiacum cure.[72] Von Hutten also equated the Americas, pox and guaiacum:

> The use of this wood [guaiacum] was brought to us out of an ylond namyd Spagnola, this ylonde is in the west nigh to the contry of Amerik... All inhabitauntes of that

[69] Fracastoro, 55, 57.
[70] Fracastoro, 67.
[71] Fernandez and Diaz's argument was quite successful, and this is perhaps due to their unique positions. Even though the works appear more than thirty years after the initial outbreak of the pox in Europe, both writers were eye witnesses to the disease's first occurrences in Europe; furthermore, Fernandez spent over ten years in the America (beginning in 1513) and Diaz, a doctor, claims to have treated some of Columbus' sailors for pox infections.
[72] Eatough, 12.

> ylonde somtyme be diseased with the French pockes,
> lykewyse as we be with the mesels or small pockes.[73]

In response to the emerging New World theories on the origin of the disease, Fracastoro devoted the majority of the first book to an examination of syphilis as a disease of astrological or divine origin that was of non-specific geographical origins.[74] The theory that diseases were caused by heavenly bodies was an ancient one, and Fracastoro's astrological theory, as with many others, found that affliction may be spontaneously generated by particular alignments or conjunctions of planets.

Since the pox appears to have afflicted all of Europe simultaneously, Fracastoro reasoned that syphilis must have a universal source; moreover, he decided that the disease was airborne and air-generated. The air itself did not create the disease of its own accord; instead, Fracastoro presented the astrological explanation that Grünpeck had used, but he first persuasively argued that the theory was valid and can be proven by observation of the natural world:

> See how when Phoebus in winter has steered his speeding horses to the south and views our world from a lowered altitude, winter is stiff and hard with frost, it sprinkles the earth with rime and halts the wandering rivers with frosty ice. This same sun, when, nearer to Cancer, he looks on us from on high, burns the land; the groves and thirsty meadows are parched and dry summer grows grubby in the dusty fields. Nor is there any doubt but that night's splendour also, golden Moon, whom the deep oceans all the world's moistures obey, that Saturn's melancholy planet and Jupiter's star, more kindly in his sphere, that beautiful Venus and the fire of Mars and the remaining stellar bodies also change the elements and influence them perpetually, and everywhere over a wide area cause great movements: especially whenever very many of them have

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[73] Von Hutten, *De Morbo,* B2^{v}.

[74] Fracastoro must have been aware of Oviedo's work as they were close friends and correspondents. In fact, Fracastoro also exchanged letters with Peter Martyr. Martyr and Oviedo are two of the four major sources of our knowledge of Columbus' discoveries. Eatough, 7.

> entered into conjunction or deviating much from their course have kept to far different paths.[75]

Fracastoro has cleverly constructed his argument. If the sun affects the seasons and the moon causes the tides, then does it not stand to reason that the other planets, such as Jupiter, Venus, and Mars (those same gods that punished Cresseid), might also have an influence over the earth? Like the variable nature of the tides, which are dependant upon the lunar cycle, the movement of the planets effects changes on earth, and certain conjunctions or arrangements of the planets can intensify these changes. This theory, based on reason and augmented with ancient, even mythic conceptions on the nature of the heavens, tapped into superstitions associated with astronomical anomalies such as eclipses (a factor that Grünpeck found to have aggravated the astrological process which ended in the creation of the pox) and comets. Essentially, Fracastoro uses logic to support an old argument, not to explore a new idea, but he does so with strict, even original, reasoning and observation.

Fracastoro argued that fates and the heavens can cause floods, droughts, storms, and earthquakes; that the landscape of the earth itself will change and that arable earth might become seafloor or desert; that the earth has, in the past, produced new creatures via spontaneous generation, and could therefore produce new and greater beasts, such as the monsters of the classical era that shook the earth.[76] While this is worded in terms of gods and fate affecting the earth, Fracastoro is actually arguing that the earth undergoes periodic and sometimes cataclysmic changes. He now reaches the apogee of his argument:

> When you consider these matters carefully there is no reason why you should wonder that at an

[75] Fracastoro, 45.

[76] It is interesting to note that Greco-Roman mythology is used to justify Fracastoro's argument in the same way as his own observations on the sun and moon's effect on the earth. Moreover, the mythological and observable may be intertwined: he may be relating Coeus, Enceladus, and Typhoeus to creatures spoken of in myth and substantiated by the fossil record.

> appointed time the great expanse of air should grow languid with new disease and that new contagions should affect frail living creatures under a destined star after the passage of long centuries.[77]

Fracastoro then reasoned that if all these things could happen, why would it be surprising that a new disease could have been created? Having reached the pinnacle of his argument, Fracastoro turned to a more fanciful presentation that directly paralleled Henryson's vision of a heavenly court. While he continued to pursue the astrological theme, he also began to personify the astrological bodies, and thus they were transformed into an image of the Greco-Roman gods acting in concert:

> Jupiter from his solitary lofty throne on which he is accustomed to sit in state reviewed the fates and unraveled the future, greatly pitying the unlucky earth its troubles: wars, men's misfortunes, sturdy empires destined to fall, pillage, doors wide open to death, above all the new disease, a mysterious contagion, a disease not to be assuaged by any strength of human resource. The rest of the gods assented: Olympus shook and trembled, the aether was contaminated by a discharge from the new disease. Gradually tracts of air and wide space received the plague, and an unusual putrefaction came into the empty air and carried contagion over all the sky.[78]

In this tableau, logic was supplanted by the fantastic as the planets were transformed into the gods from whom they derive their namesakes. Under Jupiter's direction, the ether, or air, was corrupted with the new disease, and the Greco-Roman gods allowed fate to unleash the disease upon the earth.

Syphilis, Book II: An Old World Myth

In the second book of *Syphilis*, Fracastoro created an Old World origin myth for the disease. In this tale, Ilceus, a hunter, angers Diana by killing a sacred stag.

[77] Fracastoro, 47.
[78] Fracastoro, 51.

She implores her brother, Apollo, to avenge its death, and as a result, the god of medicine afflicts Ilceus with syphilis. While this seems to be merely a device to introduce the myth, Geoffrey Eatough conjectures that it is not a random creation:

> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* X 538-539, Venus recommends stag hunting to Adonis as a sport safer than boar hunting. The stag was however Diana's creature. Diana herself represented chastity. The killing of her stag, an animal not unlike the unicorn, might symbolise sexual transgression.[79]

Even in his appropriation of a classical vehicle, Fracastoro was observing the disease and is subtly recognising that syphilis is, by-and-large, a sexually transmitted disease. Due to her association with chastity, Diana was considered: "a good guide for syphilitics," and she may also elicit associations with the Virgin Mary to whom early syphilitics prayed.[80] Eatough also notes that Fracastoro "had an interest in vegetarianism, a philosophy in which the killing and eating of animals is intertwined with other forms of sensual indulgence."[81] Images of hunting and the eating of flesh again imply a connection to the fleshy, sensual-sexual connotations of the pox, and thus it would seem that Fracastoro was subtly suggesting that Ilceus was a moral transgressor through his sensual indulgence.

Ilceus realizes that he has been cursed by a god or goddess, and in order to be cured, he must discern whom he has offended before he can expiate his guilt. As a result, the afflicted hero wanders on a pilgrimage for both repentance and a cure.[82] He remains unsuccessful in his quest until the goddess Callirhoe takes pity upon him

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[79] Eatough, 159.
[80] Eatough, 22. There is a tradition of pox saints, such as St. Dennis and Job, so much so that syphilis was sometimes called Job's ague or Job's scab.
[81] Eatough, 159.
[82] Ilceus' search for the causes of his disease is important because the ancients believed that disease was a curse from the gods, and the diseased would have to find which god or goddess they angered in order to placate them and have the curse lifted.

and reveals to him that the children of Leto, Diana and Apollo, have punished him.[83] She also makes it known that the sibling gods will see that Ilceus is refused help "anywhere the sun gazes, so if any salvation exists it must be sought in the depths of the earth below."[84] This premise sets the scene for Ilceus' underground journey which ends in his discovery of the mercury treatment. Accordingly, Fracastoro chose mercury-inspired motifs—primarily those dealing with the classical pantheon and alchemy to play upon the role of mercury as both a god and an element.

Since the gods of Olympus will not help him, Ilceus must summon Ops and the goddesses of the earth and night through sacrifice and supplication. In accordance with Callirhoe's advice, Ilceus made a pilgrimage to a sacred cave, where he placed:

> A lamb with black fleece at the threshold's edge and sacrificed the trembling creature to great Ops. "To you, mighty Ops," he said, "I sacrifice this lamb." Then he prayed to Night and the Goddesses of Night, powers unknown. And now he began to burn the citrus wood and the black Cyprus, just as his voice heard from afar echoing through the caverns of the earth, struck the ears of the sacred Nymphs.[85]

Ilceus' prayers are heard by the sacred nymphs that attend Ops, and he is admitted into their fantastical world. Beneath the surface of the earth, Ilceus finds that the goddesses of the night and the Earth are committed to acts of alchemical creation:

> Mining for sparks of metals, the seeds of flame and shimmering fire scattered through all the earth. Others mix the molten matter and coerce the mass within moulds, scattering it on large amounts of cold water. Not far away the Cyclopes of Etna have their quarters which

[83] It is significant that Callirhoe takes pity upon Ilceus. Callirhoe means "fair-flowing;" furthermore, she is viewed as either the daughter of Oceanus or the river-god Achelous. Eatough points out that Callirhoe was a common name for fountains; however, he believes that Fracastoro may be referring to a specific fountain in Palestine renowned for its medicinal powers that is mentioned in Pliny (NH V.72), the Old Testament (2 Kings V.10-14), and Josephus (*The Jewish War* I.33.5 and *Jewish Antiquities* XVII.6.5). Eatough further points out that there is a tradition of ritual bathing as a cure of skin diseases. Eatough, 159.

[84] Fracastoro, 77, 79.

[85] Fracastoro, 79.

> smoke from the furnaces they break open; and they shape and temper with hissing fire and beat out the ringing metals.[86]

In the creation of gold, Fracastoro's imagery moves away from the classical imagery of a Vulcan's underworld workshop to an alchemical wonderland where treated "sulphurous fluids and streams of quicksilver" spawn "particles of glistening gold."[87] Ilceus is eventually cured by bathing in a subterranean river of pure mercury. This sort of ritual bathing not only segues into Fracastoro's discussion on the mercury treatment but also recalls ritual bathing.[88] After he is cured, Ilceus returns to the world bearing the knowledge of this new cure.

Syphilis, Book III and the Imperialism of the New Disease

The primacy of place, the conception of otherness, and the role of xenophobia in the evaluation of disease are some of the fundamental elements of Renaissance medicine that shape Fracastoro's New World myth in Book III. By Fracastoro's time, the popular naming of the pox had revealed rampant xenophobic and nationalistic tendencies. Like Book I, Book III's New World myth, designed around the guaiac cure, attempted to disengage from the increasingly popular belief in the New World origin of the pox. As a result, Fracastoro designed a myth in which Amerindians and Spaniards both get the pox in the New World; however, *both* earn their disease through separate blasphemous practices: the Amerindians for Syphilis' idolatrous practices and the Spaniards for shooting Apollo's sacred birds. This unsatisfying set of myths essentially contradicts Fracastoro's argument against the New World

[86] Fracastoro, 81.
[87] Fracastoro, 79.
[88] Frazer discusses ritual bathing in the context of Europeans bathing on St. John the Baptist's day. He believes that this harkens back to Adonis and ancient bathing-for-cure rituals, especially for skin diseases. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 244.

theory.[89] The guaiac cure was derived from the guaiacum tree which was indigenous to the New World. Fracastoro probably placed this myth in the New World to comply with the convention that cures for diseases could be found where the disease originated.[90] Medical experts now hold that the guaiac cure was ineffective; however, it was enormously popular in the sixteenth century. Much of guaiacum's success was the result of clever marketing by the powerful German mercantile family, the Fuggers of Augsburg, who held a monopoly on the importation and distribution of guaiacum from the New World. Von Hutten's *De Morbo* is a testimonial in support of guaiacum.[91]

As one of the most popular treatments, Fracastoro was compelled to discuss guaiacum. His placement of the myth in a New World context had far more to do with the guaiac cure than the disease itself. Paradoxically, he stringently avoided associating the origin of the disease with America, while creating a poxy New World origin myth. In Book I, Fracastoro attempted to discount the rather recent belief that the disease came from the New World. Nevertheless, he did not deny that the pox may have first been in the New World, saying: "this kind of sickness has reigned in

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[89] Later authors, such as Monardes streamline Fracastoro's guaiac myth by espousing the pox as a New World disease which the Spanish caught from the Amerindians:

> Spaniards learn about holy wood from an Amerindian:
> There was an Indian that gave knowledge thereof to his Maister in this maner. There was a Spaniard that did suffer great paines of the Pox, which he had taken by the company of an Indian woman, but his servant being one of the Phisitions of the country, gave unto him the water of *Guaiacan,* wherewith not onely his grievous paynes were taken away that he did suffer, but he was healed very well of the evill.

Nicolás Monardes, *Joyfull Newes Out of the New-found Worlde*, trans. John Frampton (London, 1596), C2^{v}, EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004.

[90] According to Gordon Williams in his work, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, Guaiacum is "a tropical American tree yielding wood which was used in pox-treatment. The earliest reference seems to be [... from] 1516." Guaiac treatment has a further connection to the Colombian Exchange concept due to the belief that diseases and the cure come from a common source, as voiced by Oviedo in *Historia de las Indias* (1535), Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, vol. 1 (London, Athlone, 1997), 628.

[91] The guaiacum cure proved to be infective for von Hutten. His illness was only experiencing a remission, and he later succumbed to the disease.

all the cities over there from the beginnings of time."[92] His lengthy reasoning on the nature of illness placed the pox's origins in poisonous, astrologically-born miasmas—a belief that not only set the stage for his future work, *De Contagione,* but also represented an effort to dissuade others from seeing the New World as the source of the disease.[93]

Despite his obvious wish to present the New World in a positive light, Fracastoro's second myth is set in the Americas. To offset any negative connotation which might arise through the association of the pox with the Americas, he stressed the heroic nature of New World exploration:

> In the great Ocean, beneath the blazing star of Cancer, where the sun hides when it is already midnight with us, an island lies, unknown till this time, of vast expanse. The race which discovered it gave it their family name of Spain (Hispaniola); the land is fertile in gold, but made far richer by one tree—they call this in the sounds of their native speech Guaiacum.[94]

Fracastoro linked the cure to Columbus' first landfall, Hispaniola.[95] In this mythic version of the discovery of the New World, Columbus is represented by "the great-hearted hero, chosen by the fates for this great task."[96] His men are cursed for blasphemous actions: they shoot blue birds that are sacred to Apollo. The Spaniards get the pox as a result of this curse, and friendly natives show them the cure. These natives were descendants of Atlantis: an argument used in the early years of the

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[92] Fracastoro, 41.
[93] *De Contagione* (1546), another of Fracastoro's three works on syphilis, is often cited as a precursor to germ theory in which he comes "close to expressing a modern concept of microbial infection." Oriel, 15.
[94] Fracastoro, 87, 89.
[95] Modern day Haiti
[96] Fracastoro, 91. Fracastoro's representation of Columbus as a mythic hero was prefigured by the image that the Admiral projected himself: "Columbus saw himself as a modern Argonaut... and like Aeneas reaching Italy he intended to find new cities and give names to a new land." Eatough, 23.

sixteenth century to ennoble Native Americans.[97] He also attempted to present the Amerindians positively by integrating them into the Old Testament: he claimed that their land was that of "Ophir, the fabulous land from which King Solomon's sailors brought gold."[98] The natives reveal that the pox has long been in their country and that it was first visited upon their ancestor, Syphilis—a shepherd who blasphemed against the sun god and incited his countrymen to do the same.[99] A friendly Amerindian chief tells the Spaniards' brave captain the story of Syphilis' ensuing repentance and his eventual cure granted by the gods. The chief's story culminates in the redemption of Syphilis; likewise, the chief's countrymen were also granted a reprieve from the gods in the form of the miraculous guaiacum cure.

The poem's direction might be more clearly understood if one attempts to unravel Fracastoro's intentions. For instance, Fracastoro never directly linked syphilis to sexual activity. This may be because Fracastoro did not want to offend powerful patrons.[100] Nonetheless, he warned syphilitics against angering Venus by acting irresponsibly, and to avoid the "soft pleasure of love-making"; furthermore, he, like Grünpeck, attributed the astrological source of syphilis to a planetary conjunction under the influence of Scorpio—the constellation which rules the genital regions.[101] From these references, one can reasonably expect that he was aware of syphilis' venereal nature. Fracastoro also condoned New World exploration, but he did not support the Spaniards' treatment of the Amerindians—an opinion shared by Leo X,

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[97] Fracastoro, 93, 95. By associating Amerindians with Atlantis or as a lost tribe of Israel, early supporters of the Native Americans sought to elevate their position—by becoming descendants of the classical world or the Judeo-Christian history, Amerindians might then be afforded some rights rather than being treated as savages, slave, or animals.

[98] Eatough, 23.

[99] Fracastoro, 101.

[100] In Book I, Fracastoro eulogizes a noble and talented youth who died of the pox. See Fracastoro, 57, 59.

[101] According to Gordon Williams, "The ancients viewed the scorpion's raised tail as a phallic symbol; the post-syphilitic era viewed in terms of the poison of STDs." During the Renaissance, a reference to a scorpion may refer to a prostitute infected with a sexually transmitted disease—i.e.—one who stings with her "tail." See 174-177.

the reigning Pope.[102] As a result of these beliefs, Fracastoro embraced his subject very carefully. He was aware of the persuasiveness of the theory that the pox came from the New World, but he did not want to present the Americas or the Amerindians in a poor light. He seemed aware of the venereal nature of the disease, but he also seemed to not want to offend powerful and possibly poxy men.

Fracastoro maintained an ambiguous stance on syphilis' venereal nature. Like Cresseid's venereal leprosy, he ostensibly attributed the pox to blasphemy. In the majority of early modern creation and origin myths that addressed the pox or the plague, the disease is a punishment for the impiety of man.[103] Cresseid is punished for blaspheming Cupid and Venus; however, there are repeated suggestions that her real crime is sensual. Ilceus and Columbus' sailors both kill animals sacred to the gods—but Ilceus' crime specifically offends Diana—a goddess to whom chastity is sacred. The shepherd, Syphilis, blasphemes and heretically leads his nation to worship their king as a god; Grünpeck's Europeans arouse the wrath of God by denying the supremacy of the Holy Roman Emperor—God's chosen temporal power, and de Mussis and his late medieval contemporaries speculate that God gave the Italians the plague for massacring Byzantine Christians. Most of these acts of impiety are presented in mythic visions; however, classical imagery is occasionally supplanted by Old Testament or apocalyptic portrayals of an angry Judeo-Christian God. Concern for the impious auspices of the pox seems to have plagued many writers and theologians. Leo X made provisions for the victims of the pox, which "replaced leprosy as a disease of peculiarly religious concern."[104]

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[102] Incidentally, *Syphilis* was dedicated to Pietro Bembo, Fracastoro's friend, patron and also the secretary of Leo X. Eatough, 4.
[103] Disease was also linked with impiety in classical literature as in *The Odyssey* and *The Argonautica.*
[104] Eatough, 4.

The Continuation of Poxy Mythopoeia

It would seem that the key to understanding the phenomenon of these poxed mythologies relies not only on a careful reading of the texts and familiarity of the context in which they were written but also on an understanding of myth as an early modern discursive mode. Perhaps what is most difficult for a modern reader to comprehend is that for Renaissance authors, myth and reality could quite easily exist side by side, and anything that could not be disproved might be generally accepted to exist. Thus, when Ilceus makes a sacrifice to Ops, nymphs hear his prayer and take pity upon him. While this seems to be a fantastical moment of fiction, in Fracastoro's time "there was a lively belief, shared for instance by Paracelsus, in nymphs who inhabited mines and other areas below the earth."[105] Nor was this belief in supernatural creatures unusual: Columbus claimed to have seen mermaids while sailing in the waters of the New World. It is in this sort of world that Grünpeck and Fracastoro's angry Christian God can coexist with the Greco-Roman gods; this same fertile multiplicity of pox myths lends much to the multivalent nature of the pox metaphor

In Book III, the New World is presented as a paradisical environment and inhabited by Amerindian people who do not know the corrupting influences of civilisation. It was there that the guaiacum treatment was discovered. The scientific name for guaiacum is *lignum vitae*, or wood of life.[106] *Lignum vitae* and the other subspecies of guaiacum, *lignum sancta,* holy wood, immediately call to mind references to Christ and the Cross, and Eatough argued that Fracastoro reinforced these sacred associations; Eatough further explained the root of this myth: "the traditional Holy Tree was the Tree of Paradise sprung from three seeds which Seth put

[105] Eatough, 22.
[106] Eatough, 170.

in the mouth of Adam when Adam was buried. Later the Cross was made from this tree."[107] Although Fracastoro was writing a New World myth, he, like many other early modern writers, inscribed it with the culture and religions of Western European culture. Upon encountering what was probably the Orinoco River, Christopher Columbus claimed that he had found one of the four rivers of Paradise, and his writings also deliberately described the New World in paradisical terms.[108] Guaiacum then becomes part of Christian apocrypha, and *lignum vitae* appropriated the healing virtues of the Holy Cross.

Fracastoro was able to bind seemingly disparate pox myths into a literary whole. Even to his contemporaries, his conflicting stories did not stand as literal origin myths: they were a literary appropriation of the origin myth form.[109] Fracastoro borrowed from the pox myths of previous authors, as well as from the larger tradition of disease origin myths and disease-as-sin metaphors; however, his pox myths are unique because of his synthesis of astrology, observation and logic with the intention not of making a myth but mythic literature. For Fracastoro, myth-making serves a literary-philosophical, rather than a concrete, explanatory, end. Previous authors, such as Grünpeck, created myths in order to impart information—as a conceptual frame work. Fracastoro was attempting to make a myth that would last—one that both imparted information to present readers and that would be admired for its literary qualities both by contemporaries and future posterity. Fracastoro superseded the original auspices of pox mythopoeia. Where the myths once sought to conceptualize disease, Fracastoro turned this essentially a psycho-social response into a literary template, and in doing so, he prepared the way for the complex, metaphorical conceptualization of the pox that began with his contemporary Erasmus,

[107] Eatough, 170.
[108] Eatough, 170.
[109] See Eatough, 21-28.

grew with Rabelais and was fully realized in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods.

Chapter 3

Sin and Satire: Pox in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century

> To be a true father, you must take absolute control of your son's entire being; and your primary concern must be for that part of his character which distinguishes him from the animals and comes closest to reflecting the divine.[1]

Whereas in the previous chapter, I addressed the naming and contextualizing of the pox within the European medico-cultural consciousness, this section examines the next step in the evolution of the metaphor, which is the proliferation of syphilis signs, symptoms and treatments within literature. In many ways, this chapter is perhaps the most difficult to write because of its thematic and stylistic diversity as well as its chronological breadth. In this period, Erasmus sought to contain the pox with common sense and civic measures, and François Rabelais embraced the disease as part of the grotesque pageant of life, while English authors employed the pox in prose, poems and drama in the pursuit of educational, religious and satirical ends. One only has to read Margaret Healy's *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* and Anne Lake Prescott's *Imagining Rabelais* to realize that Erasmus and Rabelais are principal influences behind the development of the pox metaphor in the sixteenth century.[2] Having said this, there are a number of early sixteenth-century writers that addressed the pox, and pox writings from this era were remarkably diverse: syphilis appeared with regularity in works with medical, religious, political, historical and

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[1] Desiderius Erasmus, "On Education for Children," trans. Beert C. Verstraete, in *The Erasmus Reader*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 67.

[2] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave, 2001), Anne Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998).

philosophical as well as literary dimensions. While the authors debated the medical, social and scientific aspects of syphilis, early Protestant writers appropriated the disease with notable success to attack and satirize the Roman Catholic Church.

Almost immediately after it was recognized, the pox was quickly integrated into the European literary consciousness as a "living death," a "hell on earth" and "the painful wages of sin."[3] The best of the early pox writers, such as Erasmus and Rabelais, were able to combine literary skill with a wealth of metaphorical applications to manipulate traditional meanings of early pox images with impressive facility. Through their efforts, they introduced the metaphor to a large audience and achieved Fracastoro's goal of making the pox an acceptable topic of high literature.

Both Erasmus and Rabelais not only revealed the concerns of their contemporaries, they were instrumental in shaping future pockified discourse. Erasmus' social concerns, such as with poxy marriages, were reflected in the writings of Thomas More, Heinrich Bullinger and Rabelais. Furthermore, these pockified concerns were passed onto generations of schoolboys for whom works such as *The Colloquies* became standard texts.[4] Rabelais' consummate use of syphilis as a creative element of grotesque satire was also remarkably influential. Even though translations of his writings were largely absent in English through the whole of the sixteenth century, they posed a significant influence on the rebirth of the pox

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[3] Margaret Healy, "Seeing Contagious Bodies in Early Modern England," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Darryl Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 160.

[4] Healy has argued that Erasmus' writing was popular because its emphasis on "personal responsibility and individual moral choice" provided "important models for godly behavior in the reformed Church." See Healy, *Fictions,* 139-140. For the role of Erasmus' *Colloquies* in English schools, see Dickie A. Spurgeon, introduction, *Tudor Translations of the Colloquies of Erasmus, (1536-1584),* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972), vii, or M. L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain, 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 47, or Foster Watson, *The English Grammar Schools to 1660* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 328-329.

metaphor for the Wits in the 1590s.[5]

Early sixteenth-century English writers that addressed the pox were not as accomplished as Erasmus and Rabelais; nevertheless, they did use syphilis imagery in a wide range of applications and with various ends. Thus, John Fisher employed the pox as a tragic consequence and proof of sin; Robert Copland and Simon Fish equated it with poverty and immorality in the *demi-monde* of masterless men and women, and John Skelton's poxy references emblazoned the various objects of his invective, while William Barlow and John Ryckes, like many early Protestants, used the pox to attack the Catholic Church. Perhaps the most complex early English literary images of the pox appeared in Tudor morality plays in which "early Protestant dramatists clearly recognized, and exploited, the compelling theatrical value—the tantalizing erotic and comic possibilities—of sin."[6] The anonymous author of *Nice Wanton* (*circa* 1560) elevated syphilis to the position of the primary didactic signifier of lecherous sin and reinforced the dominant theme of early sixteenth-century pockified literature, which was the relation of internal spiritual-moral corruption and external, poxy disease.

Erasmus' Didactic Satire

> Erasmus troubled himself with the effects of the new sexually transmitted infection on the innocent victims of male libertine behavior—their wives and children. He took the culpable male polluters to task in a way that indicates he was far more concerned with the ethical and health messages he was trying to convey than with placating his male readers.[7]

Erasmus was perhaps the most successful early sixteenth-century pox writer

[5] For a full discussion on the history of Rabelais and his characters' appearance and impact on early modern English literature see Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais.*
[6] Healy, *Fictions*, 146.
[7] Healy, *Fictions,* 143-144.

because of his ability to apply the pox to a breadth of topics "in a style which was dramatic, witty, homely and heavily ironic."[8] He was able to appropriate and develop pox metaphors while grounding new syphilis imagery in traditional leprosy-inspired discourse on disease as filth and sin.[9] Erasmus, who so prolifically extolled his worldview through essays of instruction, embraced syphilis as an educational tool. He used the pox metaphor to comment on hygiene; condemn prostitution, war and corrupt clergy; and critique the state of marriage.

It goes without saying that Erasmus was one of the most renowned authors of his age. His influence would prove to be instrumental in popularizing the pox metaphor. Healey, writing about Erasmus' effect on Jacobean pox writing, argues that "those with at least a grammar school education would have been familiar with widely disseminated Erasmian views on hazardous 'matches,' and some spectators would undoubtedly have seen a popular emblem which illustrated a '*Nupta contagioso*'" (see fig. 3).[10] His *Colloquies* virtually became required reading in the emerging educational system where Erasmus was praised both for his brilliant Latinity and his wisdom. Healy attests that the *Colloquies* were "prescribed reading in the grammar schools of England" and that their popularity can be seen in the "numerous editions and translations" of his work.[11] Erasmus' large readership would have insured that both his interest in pox prevention and his pox-as-satire would come to the attention of many people.

Erasmus' very popularity and the insistence with which he addressed his poxy concerns greatly contributed to the formation of the pox metaphor as he popularized

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[8] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 139.
[9] Healy points out that syphilis, "with its prominent skin lesions and chronic progress… readily inherited the traditions surrounding the old, rapidly disappearing sickness, leprosy." Margaret Healy, "Seeing Contagious Bodies in Early Modern England," in *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture,* eds. Darryl Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 160.
[10] Margaret Healy, "Pericles and the Pox," *Shakespeare's Late Plays*, edited by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 98.
[11] Healy, *Fictions,* 139.

and refined images of the disease as a sociopolitical euphemism. Margaret Healy explained Erasmus' multivalent application of the pox and its metaphors:

> Whilst reforming intellectuals like Erasmus worried and wrote about the savage effects of this disease and called for preventative health measures to combat it, they were also not averse to utilizing knowledge about its painful and horrific effects for propaganda purposes.[12]

At times, Erasmus' conception of the metaphor can resemble the pox-as-scourge opinions reflected in the earliest of syphilis writings; however, a reading of Erasmus' pockified writings merely as propaganda does not do justice to his literary merits. As opposed to his contemporaries who often dwell on the idea that the pox was a divine punishment for misdeeds, Erasmus' interest in syphilis often appeared to be more social than evangelical, even though at times, he belabored the conception that syphilis is, what he terms, "the new leprosy" and a punishment from God.[13]

Erasmus' Poxy Writings

Erasmus approached syphilis as a major social concern and harnessed it as a metaphorical force behind his satirical writings. In the 1523 editions of the *Colloquies,* he began with rather typical pox-as-scourge imagery. In "The Young Man and the Harlot," for example, the man, Sephronius, a reformed whoremonger, seeks to reform the harlot, Lucretia, whom he had once patronized. Sephronius employs typical threats of dishonour and shame, ungodliness and uncleanliness, which segue into the physical threat of contracting the fearful Spanish Pox:

> Christ held you so dear that he redeemed you with his own blood, so dear that he wanted you to share the heavenly inheritance; and you make yourself a public sewer that every Tom, Dick, and Harry—the dirty, the vile, the diseased—resorts to and empties his filth into.

[12] Margaret Healy, "Pericles," 101.
[13] See, for example: Desiderius Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, ed. Erika Rummel, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 89.

> If you haven't yet caught the new contagion called the Spanish Pox, you can't long escape it. If you prosper in every other respect, even if you have fame and fortune, what will you be but a living corpse?[14]

While there is an obvious connection between syphilis and sexuality, Sephronius creates an argument that recalls the earlier relation between leprosy, pox and blasphemy. If Christ holds Lucretia dear, then it is implied that her body is sacred. By prostituting herself, she is committing the sin of blasphemy by defiling her body which is sacred to God.

Syphilis has replaced Henryson's image of venereal leprosy as an even more concrete example of punishment for sin; nevertheless, leprosy's powerful connotations with corruption and sin continued to color Erasmus' texts. Erasmus stressed relationship between leprosy and the pox in "The Soldier and the Carthusian." In this exchange, the monk asks a syphilis-infected soldier: "what prizes do you bring home to your wife and children? Leprosy? (Since the pox is nothing but a kind of leprosy)."[15] Here, syphilis is associated with the debauches and pillaging associated with soldiers and war. Erasmus even finds a way bringing the pox into another of the *Colloquies* of 1523, when he discusses the deplorable state of German inns. He creates an image of the filth and disorder in a hot, overcrowded common room:

> Quite apart from the belching of garlic, the breaking of wind, the stinking breaths, many persons suffer from hidden diseases, and every disease is contagious. Undoubtedly many have the Spanish, or as some call it, French pox, though it's common to all countries. In my opinion, there's as much danger from these men as from lepers. Just imagine, now, how great the risk of plague.[16]

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[14] Erasmus, "The Young Man and the Harlot," *Erasmus on Women*, 54.
[15] Desiderius Erasmus, "The Soldier and the Carthusian," *Colloquies*, 133.
[16] Erasmus, "Inns," *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. Craig Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 150.

Erasmus equated the pox with soldiers, warring, prostitution and now, with a more personal dislike—filthy inns. According to Healy during this period, "anxieties about moral and physical pollution coincided."[17] In "Inns," Erasmus was manipulating this anxiety. He found inns, particularly German ones, unhygienic; as a result, he equated filth with sin and sin with the pox. Syphilis was engendered in unclean environments, just as sin, which could engender and/or be exemplified by the pox, was created by moral impurity.

Erasmus' Pockified Marriages

As early as 1523, Erasmus had directly introduced the pox into discussions on prostitution, war and hospitality and touched upon the relationship between leprosy and the pox as filth, corruption and sin. Erasmus focused on the pox-leprosy connection in "The Institution of Marriage," first published in 1526, which was ironically dedicated to Catherine of Aragon's "exemplary marriage" to Henry VIII.[18] By this time, however, he had developed the issue to address a particular social concern: the marriage between healthy young women and syphilitic men. In doing so, he discovered a social cause that dominated his pox writings for the next several years and "challenged comfortable male assumptions about society's diseased polluters."[19]

In "The Institution of Marriage," Erasmus, like Thomas More in *Utopia*, argued that health was a primary concern in the creation of a happy union. Erasmus categorized ailments and their impact upon a marriage, and he found that syphilis was a concern even beyond ordinary illnesses: "some conditions are more distressing than any ordinary illness, such as leprosy or what is commonly called the Neapolitan pox,

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[17] Healy, *Fictions,* 141.
[18] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women,* 79.
[19] Healy, *Fictions,* 144.

probably worse than any leprosy."[20] Many of his arguments against pockified matrimony, or marriages of healthy young women to syphilitic men are dramatized in the "A Marriage in Name Only" (1529). The treatise was dedicated to guiding people toward wise unions by dissuading foolish parents who might wish to marry their healthy daughters to syphilitic men for the sake of a title.

Erasmus had associated the pox with leprosy in his earliest pockified writings—those of "The Young Man and the Harlot" and "The Soldier and the Carthusian." Erasmus was clearly stressing this continuing connection between the pox and leprosy because of the former disease's ancient connotations with spiritual and physical uncleanliness. In "The Institution of Marriage," Erasmus called syphilis the "new leprosy," and he further stated that the "pox differs from leprosy only in that it causes worse pain and greater danger to life, and is easier to catch."[21] Erasmus repeatedly imagined that the pox was a worse "kind of leprosy:"

> This plague [syphilis] is both more hideous and more harmful than every kind of leprosy, for it progresses quickly, recurs over and over again, and often kills, while leprosy sometimes allows a man to live to a ripe old age.[22]

This sentiment is almost exactly the same as the one he had expressed three years before in "The Institution of Marriage." To some extent, both passages are propaganda. Erasmus quite correctly stated that leprosy does not kill quickly, but syphilis, though much more virulent and deadly at the time, was no certain death sentence; furthermore, a long life with leprosy might hardly be described as a *ripe* old age.

Erasmus must have realized that he had struck upon a resonant image: syphilis and the social ills that contributed to it had become an epidemic. Based upon

[20] Desiderius Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women,* 88.
[21] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 89.
[22] Erasmus, "A Marriage in Name Only," *Colloquies*, 406.

Erasmus' socially conscious humanist instruction, both "The Institution of Marriage" and "An Unequal Marriage" stressed the importance of finding a healthy mate and the evil of parents who would knowingly marry their child to a pox-ridden spouse. If Erasmus had no pity for Ulrich von Hutten's suffering, he did believe in protecting the innocent. Thus, in "The Institution of Marriage" he wrote:

> I am still staggered by the folly of some parents, who will hand over a pure and healthy virgin to a husband riddled with the new leprosy. This pox differs from leprosy only in that it causes worse pain and greater danger to life, and is easier to catch. Shall an innocent virgin be joined to a walking corpse? If the girl had killed her father, I ask you, could anyone have devised a worse punishment? Does health not enter into the equation, when her age is reckoned, her looks inspected, her dowry counted?[23]

Erasmus' argument revolved around punishment of the innocent. Why, he asked, would young women be so horribly punished by their families? Furthermore, what sort of future could a wife or husband expect in such an instance? Erasmus implied there can be no love in this situation:

> What affection can a wife feel for a husband who hangs such a garland around her neck at the very start of their marriage? What respect will children feel for parents who have given them a life more loathsome than death?[24]

Quite correctly, Erasmus saw that an arranged marriage between a syphilitic and a healthy bride was doomed to failure. Such a poxy marriage was monumentally unjust, and he even went so far as to say that the issue from such a union would hate their parents for the disease with which they were congenitally afflicted. In response to such a crime, Erasmus appealed to the law, both secular and temporal:

> Again, since princes and their officials are supposed to take thought for everything that affects our health and well-being, I am truly astonished that they have ignored

[23] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 89.
[24] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women,* 89.

> this plague for years and allowed it to spread far and wide, especially since in Holy Writ we are commanded to banish lepers and shown how to do it [...] Why should a marriage made with a man incapable of sexual intercourse be annulled and yet a contract be valid with a man who produces pus instead of semen and begets pox instead of children?[25]

According to Erasmus' writings, the government should ban these marriages, and the church should annul these unions. In this discourse, Erasmus even suggested the banishment of syphilitics, like the Biblical injunctions for banishing lepers.[26]

Other humanist luminaries, including Sir Thomas More and Heinrich Bullinger, shared Erasmus' concern about pox-free marriages. In *Utopia,* there is a well-known passage describing the Utopians' process of choosing a wife:

> Furthermore, in choosing wives and husbands they observe earnestly and straitly a custom which seemed to us very fond and foolish. For a sad and an honest matron showeth the woman, be she maid or widow, naked to the wooer. And likewise a sage and discrete man exhibiteth the wooer naked to the woman. At this custom, we laughed and disallowed it as foolish. But they on the other part do greatly wonder at the folly of all other nations, which in buying a colt, whereas a little money is in hazard, be so chary and circumspect, that though he be almost all bare, yet they will not buy him unless the saddle and all the harness be taken off, lest under those coverings be hid some gall or sore; and yet in choosing a wife, which shall be either pleasure or displeasure to them all their life after, they be so reckless that all the residue of the woman's body being covered with clothes, they esteem her scarcely by one handbreadth (for they can see no more but her face).[27]

More's description of this Utopian aspect of courtship has often been read to mean that one should be able to the see the whole of one's future spouse, lest there might be

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[25] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women,* 89.

[26] There are records of the movement to banish syphilitics. One example of civic plans to banish pox victims appear on September 22, 1497 when "the town council of Edinburgh passed "Ane Grandgore Act" ordering all inhabitants of the town afflicted with syphilis together with those who professed to cure it into banishment to the barren little Island of Inchkeith in the Firth of Forth." R.S. Morton, "Some Aspects of the Early History of Syphilis in Scotland," *British Journal of Venereal Diseases* 38 (1962), 177.

[27] Sir Thomas More, *Utopia,* Trans. Ralph Robinson, *More's Utopia and Bacon's Atlantis,* ed. H. Goitein, (1551; London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1925), 142-143.

some hidden feature which one might find so unattractive as to ruin the marriage. As a result, the Utopian's practice of premarital inspection has often been seen as an aesthetic concern on the part of the future husband and wife. While this meaning may be true, there is an equally valid alternative reading that is in concord with Erasmus' approach to premarital inspections. J.S. Cummins has argued that this "Utopian custom may have the purpose—hinted at in 'hidden sore'—of curbing the spread of syphilis, which had become a scourge in Europe (if not Utopia)."[28] The primary reason that horses were inspected meticulously at market was not to ascertain their aesthetic beauty but to search for hidden disease.

Healy has remarked on early modern writers' considerable anxiety about hidden, poxy disease, which she posed in a question: "how could you distinguish the clean woman from the infected?"[29] More has argued that you make a careful inspection of *both* partners. The galls, sores and horse diseases such as bots, which the Utopians search for on their potential spouses, were often also used as euphemisms for syphilis.[30] Therefore, More was not only stressing the inspection of a potential spouse for aesthetic regard but also for health concerns. Furthermore, he appeared to be directly supporting Erasmus' concerns about marriages to the diseased:

> What are we to make of this, when a mind affected by bodily illness cannot be sound either, and yet parents, who consider themselves sane, thrust their sons and daughters upon such monsters and take less trouble over choosing a son-in-law than they would over a horse?

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[28] J. S. Cummins, "Pox and Paranoia in Renaissance Europe," *History Today* 38 (August 1988), 29.
[29] Healy, *Fictions,* 141.
[30] Several contemporary comparisons to pox and the horse disease, "botch" or "bots," can be found: "botch" is used to describe various kinds of disfiguring excrescence. It is a tumour from which horses suffer, especially in the groin. The nature of the bubo-like tumor and its anatomical location readily elicited parallels an association with the pox, such as in Copland's, *Complaynte of Them that ben to Late Maryed* (1505; Collier, *Illustrations* I.8) saying of whores: "Botches, pocks and goutes they engedre, In hedes and in legges and in every member." "Bots pox" (playing on the disease of horses) is used by John Skelton in "Agaynst the Scottes" (*c.*1513; 120) when he cheerfully claims that the slaughter of Scots at Flodden has rid them of pox: 'The rough-foted Scottes We have well eased them of the bottes." Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature,* vol. 1 (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 134.

> With the latter they flush out hidden defects [...] but in contracting a marriage, in our wisdom, we ignore the obvious.[31]

While Erasmus and More both used the horse-purchasing analogy, Erasmus' concern was more specific. Again, the passage alluded to the enforced marriage between healthy women and diseased men.[32] More was concerned, however, with more hygienic marriages in general in which both men and women are inspected for illness as well as displeasing defects. Erasmus and More's concerns were also echoed by Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Huldrych Zwingli as leader of the Zurich reform movement:

> Health also must be considered in the eleccion, lest thou with all that thou hast, perysh, and lest thy whole house be poysoned and hurte. Nevertheless I speake here of sore contagious syckenesses, not of such dayly infirmitees and small diseases, that all menne are subdued unto. But I spake of madnesse, frenesy, the fallyng syckenes, lamenes, leprosy, Frenche pockes, or suche lyke, whiche every manne should greatly abhorre. Notwythstondyng where maryed folkes, which now are togyther, be visited wyth suche diseases then must suffre the one wyth the other as they that are in one body.[33]

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[31] Erasmus, "The Institution of Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 89.

[32] Rabelais assumes an opposing argument: Gargantua, in a discussion with Pantagruel, agrees, that men and women should allow their parents to pick their spouses, or as he states:

> As you very well said, there never has been a law in the world that gave children permission to marry without their fathers' knowledge, will, and consent. Yet by the laws of which I am speaking there is no scoundrel, criminal, rogue or gallows-bird, no stinking, lousy, leprous ruffian, no brigand, robber, or villain in their country, who may not snatch any maiden he chooses—never mind how noble, lovely, rich, modest, and bashful she may be... so long as this ruffian has entered into an agreement with some image-bearer, for a future division of the spoils... So grieving fathers and mothers see some unknown stranger, some barbarian, some rotten, poxy, cadaverous, penurious, and miserable cur, pick up, and carry home their most lovely, delicate, rich, and healthy daughters.

Rabelais argues that parents know best, rather than children. Instead of greedy parents choosing diseased but wealthy grooms from their daughters, Rabelais imagines young women seduced by poxy crooks and married with the help of corrupt clergymen. François Rabelais , *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 419.

[33] Heinrich Bullinger, *The Golden Boke of Christen Matrimonye,* trans. Miles Coverdale (London, 1543), $H2^{v}$- $H3^{r}$, EEBO, internet, 13 July, 2004.

Like Erasmus, Bullinger was interested in educating his readership as to what constituted a good marriage. After deriding beauty as a transitory vanity, he addressed the importance of health and suggested avoiding marriage to someone with the "Frenche pockes." While More and Bullinger's suggestion that prospective husbands and wives inspected each other before marriage may seem flippant at first, it was also sensible advice packaged with a reproach against people who marry for reasons such as greed or social promotion.

More and Bullinger only briefly discussed poxy marriages, but Erasmus continued to explore the issue. In 1529, three years after the publication of "The Institution of Marriage," Erasmus was still struggling with the issue in "A Marriage in Name Only." Erasmus dramatized the situation by creating a conversation between two characters Petronius and his friend, Gabriel. The discussion begins just after Gabriel has left the disappointing wedding of a nobleman and a comely young lady:

> *Petronius*: No dancing then?
> *Gabriel*: No, it was a wretchedly lame affair.
> *Petronius*: So no favoring deity was there to gladden the nuptials?
> *Gabriel*: No divinities at all, save one goddess the Greeks call Pox.
> *Petronius*: You tell of a scabby wedding.
> *Gabriel*: An ulcerous and festering one, rather.[34]

Besides revealing Erasmus' penchant for poxy puns as a dramatic device, the passage presents a scene inundated with pockified imagery and ruled over by *Morbus Gallicus*. In this opening pun, Erasmus prefigured *Nice Wanton's* stage directions for Dalila's halting entrance representative of the gait of a syphilitic.[35] Lame, scabby, ulcerous and festering were all terms that Erasmus used to describe pox symptoms. Erasmus' insistent emphasis on images of scabs, sores, ulcers, rasping throats, halting gaits, lost hair and bound thighs threaten to infect the text. By this I mean that

[34] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 146.
[35] I will discuss the pox in *Nice Wanton* later in this chapter. See 135-138.

Erasmus' social concern (decrying poxy marriages) gave way to his over-flowing satire, based on graphic images of syphilis, and his macabre fascination with the satirical image supplanted his social message.

Nevertheless, it would seem that Erasmus' intent was not to describe the omnipresence of the disease, but rather, convey a moral, which he continued to develop:

> *Gabriel*: Why should I now describe, Petronius, a girl already known to you? Though her attire added a great deal of charm to her natural beauty. My dear Petronius, you'd have said she was some goddess altogether lovely. Meanwhile enter our handsome groom: nose broken, one foot dragging after the other..., scurvy hands, a breath that would knock you down, lifeless eyes, head bound up, bloody matter exuding from nose and ears. Other men have rings on their fingers, this one even wears rings on his thighs.[36]

Erasmus incorporated a visceral description of pox symptoms that make the groom into an object of horror. In opposition to the groom's hideous pockified deformities, the bride is an image of beauty and health. To the friends, this treatment of the bride seems utterly inhuman:

> *Gabriel*: In my way of thinking, this treatment is more cruel than flinging her naked to bears or lions or crocodiles. Wild beasts would have spared one so beautiful, or a quick death would have ended her torment.[37]

While Gabriel cannot think of a more cruel fate, Petronius offers what will become the early modern emblemized image of a similarly excessive cruelty:

> *Petronius*: What you say is true. In my opinion, this deed is worthy of Mezentius (who according to Virgil)[38] tied dead bodies to living ones, fastening hands to hands and mouth to mouth. Though, unless I am mistaken, not even Mezentius was so savage as that he would

[36] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 147.
[37] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women,* 147.
[38] Erasmus is referring to the Etruscan tyrant Mezentius who appears in the eighth book of Virgil's *Aeneid.*

> yoke so lovely a girl to a corpse. And there's no corpse you wouldn't rather be bound to than such a stinking one, for his breath is sheer poison, his speech a plague, his touch death.[39]

Of particular interest is the picture that Petronius paints of a living body bound to a dead corpse. Erasmus had been developing the image of the syphilitic as a living corpse since 1523, and through his efforts, the representation of Mezentius' infamous punishment became a powerful pox motif in sixteenth-century emblemology. In the colloquy, Petronius and Gabriel continue their discussion, exploring how the bride found herself damned to such a fate:

> *Petronius*: Perhaps her parents were unaware of the groom's disease...
> *Petronius*: Still, there must have been something to recommend him to her parents.
> *Gabriel*: Only his glorious title of knight. [40]

The bride has come to this end because of her parents' ambition. It seems that the girl's parents have social aspirations, which a marriage to a knight will further. The shameless grasping for distinction and upward mobility was contrary to Renaissance conceptions of a well-ordered class structure and, as a result, it was represented as the cause for which parents would maim or even destroy their daughter and future grandchildren:

> *Gabriel*: But *they* [parents] think it doesn't matter whom they couple with a daughter and from what sort of stock come the children who will not only inherit all the wealth but even govern the commonwealth...[41]

Erasmus developed the image of one healthy girl married to a syphilitic knight into the picture of an afflicted commonwealth: a leap from the body personal to the body politic. Not only are the parents' endangering their progeny, they are also threatening to destroy the fabric of society itself. By breaking social barriers to satisfy social

[39] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 147.
[40] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 148.
[41] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 148.

aspirations, they are creating a diseased family that will, in their elevated position, play an equally rotten role in governing the body politic.

If this type of marriage defied social protocol in terms of class barriers, the heart of Erasmus' concern was the disease itself. Therefore, Petronius and Gabriel also deride the outrage that the public would feel if a commoner kissed a girl of noble blood, or if she were married to a handicapped person (one with a slight limp), or a Franciscan (an able-bodied man beneath a habit). Petronius makes a pun out of the most taboo of these other unacceptable matches:

> This bride passes her whole life with a corpse that is only half-alive. If a girl marries a priest, people joke about an "anointed" man, but this girl married a man who's worse than smeared with ointment.[42]

Erasmus stressed this point in his closing quibble on parents marrying their daughters to syphilitics, or men smeared with ointment, as opposed to clergy, or anointed men. His was a valid point: a marriage to a clergyman would have been considered unthinkable: no parent would marry his or her daughter to a monk or priest. A marriage such as this, however, might at least have produced healthy children—since the stigma is social rather than physical. Parents, who sought to marry their daughters to syphilitics to increase their social standing, not only upset the social structure but contributed to the destruction of society by enabling the creation of a congenitally diseased generation.

Once the conversation has turned toward the commonwealth, Petronius and Gabriel follow a tangent of reasoning that examines the imposition of government controls: inspectors regulated the wine trade and collected excise taxes. However, no one regulated marriages in a similar manner:

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[42] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 150.

> *Gabriel*: The girl who knowingly marries a diseased man perhaps deserves the trouble she's brought upon herself, though if I were head of the government, I would run them both out of town. But if she married this baneful pest when he misrepresented himself as sound—if I were pope, I'd annul this marriage…
> *Petronius*: On what pretext, since a marriage lawfully contracted cannot be annulled by mortal man?
> *Gabriel*: What? Do you think one made by a wicked fraud is contracted lawfully? The contract isn't valid if the girl is deceived into marrying a slave she thought a free man. Here the husband is slave to a loathsome mistress, Pox, and this slavery is the more wretched because she sets none free; no hope of release can mitigate the misery of bondage.
> *Petronius*: You've discovered a pretext, clearly.
> *Gabriel*: Besides, marriage exists only between the living. Here the girl is married to a dead man.[43]

Petronius and Gabriel have now decided that the marriage of syphilitics should be illegal; a syphilitic man deceiving a healthy wife is a criminal and the contract of such a marriage is void because it was deceitful. Gabriel likens a healthy woman married to a syphilitic to one who unwittingly married a slave. The pox, however, was even worse than slavery because, according to Erasmus, it was incurable and set no one free. Erasmus argued that syphilis was a death sentence, and since marriages can only exist between the living, a *nupta contagioso* between a woman and a syphilitic man is not a binding contract.

Erasmus had, by this time, reached the zenith of his argument: here, Gabriel calls for the execution of the pox-ridden after deciding: "how much less is the peril from plague than from this pox!"[44] By exaggerating the problem to the point which Gabriel demanded the execution of syphilitics, Erasmus achieves a fear of the pox bordering on a neurosis, which reveals an unprecedented concern with this new disease. After the climactic display of rhetorical exaggeration, a dénouement is achieved when Gabriel and Petronius reach an agreement with the decision that they

[43] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 151.
[44] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 152-153.

cannot execute pox victims; however, they recognize the need to contain the pox by exercising certain social controls such as the abolition of the common drinking cup and greeting with a kiss.[45]

Erasmus' concern with the pox most clearly manifested itself between 1523 and 1529. While his interest in the disease may have been aggravated by his contentious relationship with von Hutten, he was genuinely horrified by syphilis. This nearly neurotic fear altered his cultural perceptions. Erasmus always seems to have had a fear of uncleanliness and disease, and nowhere did this manifest itself more clearly than in his pox writings. It might even be argued that at the height of his interest in syphilis, he was overcome by panic, and thus, he advocated the banishment of syphilitics, as in "The Institution of Marriage." By the time he wrote "An Unequal Marriage" he strengthened his arguments against pockified marriages through hyperbole and dramatization. Despite the sentiments expressed in "An Unequal Marriage" it seems unlikely that Erasmus was truly interested in the execution of pox victims. Similarly, although he abandoned his call for the banishment of syphilitics, he remained a victim of his poxy imagination, and despite the fact that his extreme measures for controlling the disease gave way to more sound advice, his satiric and hyperbolic treatment of the disease created a profound impression on future writers.

The "Merry Disease:" Rabelais and Popular Satire

> During the Renaissance all these images of the lower stratum, from cynical abuse to the image of the underworld, were filled with a deep awareness of historic time, of the change of epochs in world history. In Rabelais this element of time and of historic change deeply pervades

[45] Erasmus, "A Marriage," *Erasmus on Women*, 153-154.

> all his images of the material bodily lower stratum and lends them historic coloring. In this work the dual body becomes a dual world, the fusion of the past and future in the single act of death of the one and the birth of another, in the image of the grotesque, historic world of becoming and renewal.[46]

Where Erasmus employed a finely-tuned, socially-conscious satire in his discussions on the pox, continental Europe's other great early sixteenth-century pox writer, François Rabelais, represented syphilis in the context of low, earthy, grotesque humor. Carol Clark contextualized François Rabelais' use of syphilis in *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* within what she described as "the comedy of the horrible," a "gallows or powdering tub humor."[47] According to Clark, syphilis was "the comic disease *par excellence*" of Rabelais' time, and it was "thought funny partly because of the deformities it produced.... but also because of the ribald circumstances in which it was known to be contracted."[48] Clark's classification of the Rabelais' poxy ramblings as powdering tub humor clearly defined it as something different from Erasmus' didactic satire; however, she did not explore the multivalent dimension of Rabelais' syphilis metaphors—the leveling power of the grotesque and the medicinal effect of laughter.

Influenced by Fracastoro and Erasmus, Rabelais embraced syphilis as a literary subject that he integrated it into the medieval tradition of the grotesque. The poxy satire of Erasmus was by-and-large dedicated to educating his readership. For Rabelais, the pox became integrated into his world of joyful satire, and it represented part of his celebration of the human condition so much so that Mikhail Bakhtin called

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[46] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1968), 435.
[47] Carol Clark, *The Vulgar Rabelais* (Glasgow: Pressgang, 1983), 115, 118.
[48] Clark, 116.

Rabelais' conception of syphilis "the merry disease [...] related to the bodily lower stratum."[49] Bakhtin described the earthy elements of Rabelais' fiction as a sort of humorous leveler, and syphilis as "a 'gay' disease." [50] Syphilis functioned much like "urine (as well as dung)" that is to say, as "matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter."[51] Rabelais' conception of poxy relief was not associated with the disease itself so much as with its emotional resonance as a product of humble unity and humor. In Rabelais' writings, we are all sufferers to whom humor can bring healing, much like the injunction in Proverbs: "A merry heart doeth good like medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (*The King James Version*, Proverbs, 17.22).

Roy Porter and G. S. Rosseau pay tribute to this Bakhtinian conception of the French author's use of syphilis in *Gout, The Patrician Malady*: "Rabelais' satires, influential for the development of the early novel, privilege podagra and syphilis as emblems of the human condition building on their heritage of rise and fall."[52] In Rabelais' merry, earthy, grotesque conception of syphilis as a pathogenic composite of life, the rise and fall of the pox came to epitomize the ebb and flow of the world's vanities and the nature of human fragility. Through satire, he was able to respond to the literary discussions of his time, while always keeping in mind the human element of disease, equality in the face of suffering and death, and the power of laughter.

Satirizing the Naming of Syphilis

As a medical doctor and a scholar, Rabelais must have had a particular awareness of the pox discussion; as a result, he responded to various authors who had

[49] Bakhtin, 330.
[50] Bakhtin, 384.
[51] Bakhtin, 335.
[52] Roy Porter and G.S. Rousseau, *Gout: The Patrician Malady* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), 212.

written about syphilis including Fracastoro. In responding to Fracastoro, Rabelais satirized the naming of the disease by referring to the Italian poet's benighted shepherd in the third book of *Gargantua and Pantagruel.*[53] When Pantagruel accompanies Panurge on his journey to find if marriage will make him a cuckold, they visit various wise men, oracles and theologians, including a certain Raminagrobis "who married the great sow for his second wife, who bore him the fair Syphilis."[54]

Rabelais provided what may be the earliest evidence of Fracastoro's shepherd Syphilis becoming a signifier for the pox. The Syphilis that Raminagrobis' wife bore—that Ramnigrobis now bears the responsibility of nurturing—can be viewed either as an illegitimate human offspring or the burden of disease, either of which might be the result of marrying an unchaste wife. Rabelais is satirizing Fracastoro's contradictory myths. At various points in *Syphilis,* Fracastoro had avoided the venereal nature of the syphilis. As a result, Rabelais satirically created Ramnigrobis' child, Syphilis, as an equally ambiguous entity: is Syphilis a human child, akin to Fracastoro's shepherd, or is the fruit of Ramnigrobis and his porcine wife more akin to that unfortunate shepherd's affliction? Rabelais has manipulated the semantics of syphilis: through his deliberate ambiguity Syphilis is both human character and disease. Where Fracastoro clearly defined the physical aspects of the disease, its treatment and cures but avoided directly discussing the venereal cause of the disease, Rabelais' Syphilis is ambiguous in everything but his (or its) cause—a sexual union. As opposed to Fracastoro's shepherd Syphilis, the victim and object-lesson, in his didactic poem, Rabelais' Syphilis is a subject of humor that gently exploits Fracastoro's contradictory myths.

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[53] Rabelais' character, Syphilis, reveals that the French author was aware of Fracastoro's work. Syphilis does not become a generally accepted term for the disease until the eighteenth century; as a result, a sixteenth-century reader would read the allusion as a reference to the poem about the disease rather than the disease itself.

[54] Rabelais, 346.

Utopia

In *Pantagruel,* Rabelais presented an image of a perfect monastery called Thélème, which one might read either as a utopian image; a commentary on the abuses of the clergy, or the fanciful sympathy of a man familiar with the social machinery that forced people into holy orders. In any case, Bakhtin claimed that Thélème combined "popular festive traits" with the vision of "essentially a humanist utopia."[55] In the idealized abbey, monks and nuns lived together pursuing pleasures, such as study and each other without any social obligations; furthermore, an inscription above the door discouraged certain supplicants from entering. It specifically included:

> You with your soure, gnawed to the bone by pox,
> Take your ulcers elsewhere and show them to others,
> Scabby from head to toe and brimful of dishonor."[56]

Rabelais' image is difficult to unravel. Is it satirically castigating religious orders that have neglected their charitable works, or is it the complaint of a man weary of seeing a class of people (those in monastic orders) forced into institutionalized charity? The second option, though seemingly far-fetched at first, is not impossible. Rabelais, no stranger to criticizing the Church, could very well have been arguing against the purchasing of good works. By this I mean, the wealthy subsidized the holy orders with a view of paying for their salvation through the monks' and nuns' good deeds in the form of masses, prayers and charity. Does Thélème then represent a Rabelaisian fantasy in which men and women forced into the holy orders by economic necessity revolt against saving the wealthy and form a utopian community here on earth? Through a Bakhtinian reading of the fantastic world of Thélème,

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[55] Bakhtin, 431.
[56] Rabelais, 154.

Rabelais' monastic utopia appears to question traditional ideals of Christian charity purchased by the wealthy at the expense of unwilling victims of the caustic realities of monastic life. In this image the pox is particularly resonant. Rabelais' monks and nuns reject syphilitics because they are both sign and signifier of the greater world: if the world obeyed Christian precepts the monks and nuns' charity would not be needed. Rabelais ironically exploited the particular incidence of monastic charitable institutions for pox victims, since they who are guilty of sensual moral transgressions seek solace and charity from those who, at least in theory, are sequestered from life and similar possibilities for pleasure and propensities for sin. In the face of this injustice, Thélème's description tells the pox victim seeking solace from the nuns and monks to show their sores to someone else.

Hyperbole and Reversal

In another pockified incident, Epistemon's decapitation and resurrection reveals a grotesque and carnivalesque social reversal. Epistemon is brought back to life by Panurge and recounts his visit to both hell and the Elysian fields. In Epistemon's vision, the mighty are brought low and the low become mighty, like "carnivalesque fools elected kings."[57] One of the most visible of these symbols is the revelation that "Pope Sixtus IV treats syphilis in the underworld," and this image initiates the concept of role reversal in which all earthly pox suffers are clear of the disease, while all those that died unscathed are now poxed.[58] Epistemon tells his friends:

> "Pope Sixtus was anointer of pox sores."
>
> "What!" exclaimed Pantagruel, "are there people with pox down there?"
>
> "Certainly," said Epistemon; "I never saw so

[57] Bakhtin, 385.
[58] Bakhtin, 384.

> many. There are more than a hundred million of them. For believe me, eveyone who hasn't had the pox in this world gets it in the next."
>
> "God Almighty," cried Panurge. "Then I'm quit of it. For I've been as far as the Hole of Gibraltar, and stopped the Pillars of Hercules and brought down some of the ripest fruit!"[59]

Panurge, the notorious lecher, finds this news promising: the reversal and pageantry of the underworld might afford an easement of his disease. This, however, was not Rabelais' only message. Pope Sixtus' job in hell, as pox-sore anointer, was meant to conjure an image of lowliness, filth and degradation. This can be read as an attack on the powerful members of the Church. Where the average low-ranking clergymen may have lived a life of toil and service to the community, early modern clergy of high rank (particularly of the Catholic Church) were often presented as notoriously corrupt and sensual. In Epistemon's vision of the underworld, which Bakhtin argued constituted a region of carnivalesque reversal, the Pope, who was probably never humble in life, was awarded the most degrading of jobs.

Marriage, Pox and Healing Laughter

In *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel,* Rabelais' novel treatment of the pox metaphor would prove to have a profound effect upon the English prose satirists that both identify with, and distance themselves from, his pockified verbal effluence. Just as Thomas More commented on Erasmus' ideas on disease and marriage in *Utopia*, Rabelais also entered into the conversation in *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*—as I discussed earlier in this chapter. His characteristic satirical levity entertains far more than the instructive satire of Erasmus and More.[60] The difference between their judicious satire compared to Rabelais' more salacious and grotesque entertainment

[59] Rabelais, 268.
[60] See 103-104.

might be summed up by the French author's laughing invocation:

> But what shall I say of the poor victims of pox and gout? Oh how often we have seen them at a moment when they were well anointed and thoroughly greased, with their faces shining like a larder lock-plate, and their teeth rattling like the keys on the manual of an organ or a spinet when it is being played, and their gullets foaming like a wild boar which the hounds have driven into the toils. And what were they doing then? Their one consolation was to have some pages of this book read to them. And some of them we have seen would have given themselves to a hundred barrels-full of old devils if they had not felt a perceptible alleviation of their pain from the reading of the said book, while they were being kept in the sweat-room, exactly as women do in the pangs of childbirth when the Life of St. Margaret is read to them.[61]

Rabelais imagined that his therapeutic humor—healing through laughter—will reduce the suffering of pox and gout victims. Rabelais, like Erasmus, employed hyperbole in his satiric discussions of the pox. In this instance, the pox is a satiric-hyperbolic punishment for those readers that do not have faith in the veracity of his tale:

> Therefore, to make an end of my prologue, I offer myself, body and soul, tripe and bowels, to a hundred thousand basket-loads of fine devils in case I lie in so much as a single word in the whole of this History. And similarly, may St. Anthony's fire burn you, the epilepsy trow you, the tunder-stroke and leg-ulcers rack you, dysentery seize you, and may the ersipelas, with its tiny cowhair rash, and quicksilver's pain on top, through your arse-hole enter up, and like Sodom and Gomorrah may you dissolve into sulphur, fire and the bottomless pit, in case you do not firmly believe everything that I tell you in this present Chronicle.[62]

Rabelais invoked a pox trope based on the infamously painful mercury treatment. His curses culminated in a description of the ravaging effect of quicksilver, or mercury, which invaded the body of a pox sufferer/unbelieving reader and provided the exclamation point to Rabelais' laughing, cursing proclamation that his story was true.

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[61] Rabelais, 167-168.
[62] Rabelais, 168-169.

The pinnacle of Erasmus' didactic pockified hyperbole—when Gabriel called for the execution of pox victims—was far different from Rabelais' recognition of the suffering of those same victims to whom he offered the healing power of laughter as relief from their disease.[63]

Rabelais was arguably the most innovative pox writer of the first half of the sixteenth century. By commenting on other writers' poxy discussions, he took syphilis from the realms of religious invective and early modern social and medical discourse, and used it as a satirical tool for enjoyment and literary criticism. Rabelais was familiar with both Erasmus' pox writings and Fracastoro's *Syphilis.* He took the disease from Fracastoro's medical analysis and Erasmus' satirically-influenced educational tool, and in his hands, he honed it into a favored weapon of satirists and popularized the disease as a metaphorical device of laughter and subversion.

Visions of a Pockified England

Even before Erasmus, Fracastoro and Rabelais, English writers were responding to the new disease. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Grünpeck's image of the pox-as-punishment was thriving in England. During the first half of the century, English writers progressed from simple pox-as-punishment metaphors and began to include syphilis in discussions on theology, poverty and crime while also adapting the pox to the theater and satirical invective. While pox writings in early modern England are diverse, they might also be said to be somewhat irregular. By this I mean that the metaphor appeared in several genres where it almost always was associated with physical or moral corruption; however, these instances are often isolated within the texts, illustrating instances rather than supporting a continuous

[63] For the Rabelaisian connection between laughter, healing, birth and renewal, see Bakhtin, "Rabelais in the History of Laughter," *Rabelais*, 59-144.

theme. Also, pox metaphors appear to have been used irregularly within genres. While the pox appears in many genres in the first half of the sixteenth century, it is at home in none: this is to say that the metaphor's meaning was not yet set or generally accepted, but rather, it was in an early state of change, growth and development. In this section, I will discuss several early English pockified passages, supported by early modern translations of renowned continental writers, in an attempt to provide a picture of how the metaphor was developing.

Pox and Religion

In the last years of Henry VII's reign, Cambridge University Chancellor and Bishop of Rochester, Saint John Fisher—who two years later was instrumental in bringing Erasmus to Cambridge—preached that the pox was a curse from God in *This Treatyse Concernynge the Fruytfull Saynges of Davyd the Kynge* [and] *Prophete in the Seven Penytencyall Psalmes*.[64] Fisher, like Erasmus, did not miss the pox-leprosy parallel, or the association of the pox with the dominant image of sin as pestilential filth. Fisher repeatedly described sin as a pockifying of the soul. This sentiment is obvious in his description of King David's sin-disease cure in which he "scoured and made ful clene his soule from the rustynesse and cankrynge of his foule sinne and after washed it with his wepynge teres."[65] For Fisher, intangible sin and the soul could be imagined in concrete terms, and his representation of sin was defined by his use of pockified terms as a cankerous infection that only abject penitence can purge/cure.

Fisher combined pox-as-sin imagery with leprosy. In his writings, he

[64] Fisher's *Fruytfull Saynges* seems to have been a popular work. According to the *English Short Title Catalogue* (2nd ed.) there are surviving editions which were published in 1508, 1509, 1510, 1525, 1529 and 1555.

[65] John Fisher, *This Treatyse Concernynge the Fruytfull Saynges of Davyd the Kynge [and] Prophete in the Seven Penytencyall Psalmes* (London, 1508), Bb2r, EEBO, internet, 29 August, 2004.

translated the threat of leprosy that had been wielded by the church fathers into the language of "God's latest scourge," syphilis.[66] In the discussion of "Psalm 142," Fisher included a horrified lament on the illnesses of the world, which asked:

> How many have [...] the flesshe eten awaye with dyvers sores and infyrmytees, how many be depryved fro theyr beaute which somtyme were well favoured of face, and wel proporcyoned in every party of theyr bodyes. How many lye in streets and hye wayes full of carbuncles and other uncurable botches, whiche also we dayly perceive at our eye grevous to beholde, how many be crucyfyed in maner by intolerable aches of bones and Joyntes with many other infyrmyteess [...] Besyde these whiche be vexed with the frensshe pockes, poore and nedy, lyenge by the hye wayes stynkynge and almost rotten above the grounde havynge intolerable ache in theyr bones, perceyve how moche we be bounde to our blyssed lorde for his manyfolde grete benafaytes gyven unto us.[67]

Fisher attempted to describe earthly hardships in light of most peoples' good fortunes. In this passage, he mentioned speech, vision, aural, and mental impairments; however, he only explicitly named one disease: the incurable botch of "the frensshe pockes."[68] Furthermore, his description of the ills of the world, which preceded his passage on the pox, was also replete with syphilitic imagery. This is to say that both the unnamed ailments which Fisher described and syphilis appeared in the text in similar pockified terms including analogous descriptions of symptoms such as botches (necrotic sores), and aches in bones and joints.

Fisher viewed the pox—in its conception as the universal scab—as a reflection of worldly hardship. It is in this context that he elucidated the parallel between sin, filth, and disease:

> More over yf the fylthynes of synne be ones concyved in the soule, and longe contynue ther by unhappy custome, it maketh foule and infecteth it more and more

[66] Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994), 60.
[67] Fisher, Yy2^{v}-Yy3^{r}.
[68] Fisher, Yy3^{r}.

> [...] As we se a byle or botch full of matter and fylth the more and the longer it be hyd, the more groweth the corrupcyon and venemouse infeccycon of it, and also perceth to the bones and corrupteth them.[69]

Again Fisher employed largely syphilitic imagery. Sin is a foul, infective agent that caused the soul to decay in a corrosive manner similar to that of syphilis. Fisher imagined that sin could cause the sinner to erupt in boils and botches that rotted their way to the body's core and infected the bones. He borrowed from an ancient tradition of presenting sin as corrupting, rotting and leprous disease; however, he found, like many of his contemporaries, that the pox had supplanted leprosy as the paradigm for the corrupting nature of sin.[70]

While authors like Fisher superimposed the pox on ancient leprosy-inspired discourse, they also did not neglect to exploit the novelty of syphilis as well. Well into the century, John Calvin picked up Grünpeck's argument that the pox was a new plague sent by God:

> If a man looke upon the diseases that bee at this day in the worlde, hee shall see that there be many which were not expressed in the law of Moses, or in ye dayes of our fathers. Howe hath whoredome bin punished by

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[69] Fisher, Yy2[r].

[70] After Fisher's martyrdom, his Anglican successors such as Thomas Cranmer seem to have continued his image of the pox as an earthly hardship which through pain and pertinence can lead to salvation. Becon, who was Archbishop Cranmer's chaplain makes this argument in *The Jewel of Joye*:

> Christ
> O who is so far estraunged from the ryght course of reason, that he had not rather have hys carnal affectes and beastly wyll mortified wyth temporal and short sicknesses in thys worlde, then for a little space to tumble and wallowe in all kynde of carnall pleasures accordinge to his fleshly desyre, and afterwarde for ever and ever to be cast into such paynes as are boeth intollerable and everlasting [...].
> Eusebius
> O whose herte is so enflamed wyth the fyre of carnall pleasure, that waxeth not colde at the hearynge of these thyngs? Whoe hadde not rather in thys worlde continnally to be shaken wyth hot agues, greaved wyth bone ache, eaten wyth canckars, pyned awaye for hunger, and to suffer any other temporall diseases that can be named, be it never so grevouse and bitter to the fleshe, then to fal into those most horrible paynes that you named heretofore?

Thomas Becon, *The Jewel of Joye* (London: 1550), E3[r]- E4[v], EEBO, internet, 10 August, 2004.

> diseases that be come uppe of late? Who knewe the pocks a hundred yeres ago? That is one horrible plague which God hath sent upon ye worlde. And it is as much as if hee had stretched his arme out of heaven, and sayde, No, they knowe mee no more to be their Judge, they harden their harts against al the plagues yet men did know and receive afore time, they make but a figge at it; but now I will make them to understand.[71]

Calvin argued that this new affliction in the world, unknown a century ago, was proof of an angry God. Radical Protestants quickly seized the image of the pox as a sign of Church corruption, and syphilis came to represent not only the sins of man but of the religious degeneracy of the Roman Catholic Church. Many writers like Erasmus, Fisher, Rabelais, Skelton and Simon Fish take part in what might loosely be termed pockified Reformation literature.[72] The pox began to develop as a signifier for the general corruption of the Church as well as the specific ailment of lecherous clergymen.

Robert Copland: The Needy and the Criminal

The theological connection between sin and syphilis was also translated into one of the earliest examples of the English coney-catching tradition. Robert Copland, the author who was infamous amongst the Elizabethans for his *Jyl of Braintford's Testament,* also wrote *The Hye Way to the Spyttell Hous*, which was something of a literary guide to the English underworld of the dispossessed, old, diseased and poor. Copland's description of the afflicted masses constantly equates poverty with sin and disease. His device of a respectable gentleman peering into the world of the

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[71] John Calvin, *The Sermons of M. John Calvin Upon the Fifth Booke of Moses Called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1564), Pppp4^{r}, EEBO, internet, 17 June, 2004.

[72] Erasmus, Rabelais and Fisher all criticized but did not leave the Church. Skelton was the least-reform minded of the group; however, his satiric attacks on Wolsey were enthusiastically appropriated by later authors, like John Bale and William Tyndale, in defense of the Protestant cause as general attacks on Church corruption. For more on the reception and application of Skelton's writings in the sixteenth century, see A. W. Barnes, "Constructing the Sexual Subject of John Skelton," *Journal of English Literary History* 71.1 (2004), 29-51.

masterless poor foreshadowed the London underworld literature of the Wits, while his catalogue of suffering was linguistically similar to Fisher's *Fruytful Saynges* in which the pox and pockified language played a primary role in describing both the sins and suffering of the world. Early in the poem, Copland emblazoned the underworld of poverty and crime with the pox:

> Forsoth they that be at suche myschefe
> That for theyr lyvyng can do no labour
> And have no frendes to do them socour
> As old people sekeand impotent
> Poore women in chyldbed have here easement
> Weyke men sore wounded by great vyolence
> And sore men eaten with pockes and pestylence
> And honest folke fallen in great poverte
> By myschaunce or other infyrmyte
> Way faryng men, and maymed souldyours
> Have theyr relyef in this poore hous of ours.[73]

The Porter tells Copland, who was both the author and the authorial persona within the text, that the old, injured, pregnant and poxed find charity at the spital. Despite this seemingly informational format, Copland's work is voyeuristic and sensational. The illustration on the opening page, which depicts a poxy couple naked together in a hospital bed, reinforces Copland's equation of sin with worldly hardships (see Fig. 4).

In conjunction with the Porter's pious platitudes about charity, Copland voiced a wealthy citizen's fear of the poor, dispossessed and masterless that not only represented a drain on the commonwealth but also, a threat to peace and security:

> How they lyve all day, to lye here at nyght
> Is losels/myghty beggers/and vacabonds
> And trewands that walke over the londs
> Mychers, hedgecrepers/fylloks and luskes[74]

Amongst the infirm, Copland imagined the healthy and strong—"mighty beggers," who not through infirmity but willfulness, live outside of society, and:

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[73] Robert Copland, *The Hye Way to the Spyttell Hous* (London, 1536), A4^{v}, EEBO, Internet, 23 June, 2004.
[74] Copland, A4^{r}.

> That all the somer kepe dyches and buskes
> Lewtryng and wandryng fro place to place
> And wyll not work/but the bypaths trace
> And lyve with Haws, and hunt the blakbery
> And with hedge brekyng make themself mery. [75]

These vagabonds live the life of societal truants; living off of the land and causing wanton destruction in the order of "hedge brekyng." Copland's persona argues that by providing shelter to vagabonds during the crueler months, the hospital enables truancy by giving vagabonds a means of surviving the winter, thus leaving them free to enjoy the more gentle seasons in vagabondry and vandalism.

The mid-sixteenth-century writings of Simon Fish presented a continuation of Copland's poxy underworld image in the synthesis of three pockified traditions: Protestant invective, political diatribe and criminal underworld literature. Like Copland, Fish offered his supplication to Henry VIII, ostensibly on the behalf of beggars:

> Most lamentably compleyneth theyr wofull misery unto your hyghnes your poore dayly bedemen the wretched hydyous monsters (on whom scarsly for horror anye else dare loke) the foule unhappy sorte of lepres, and other sore people, needy, impotente, blynde, lame, and syke, that lyve onely by almesse, how that theyr nomber is daylye so sore encreased, that all the almesse of all the well dysposed people of thys youre realme is not halfe ynoughe for to susteyne them, but that for very constreint they dye for hunger. [76]

He argued that there are so many beggars in England that they can scarcely be supported. Fish—a gentleman of Grey's Inn who was forced to flee England in 1525 after taking part in a play that attacked Cardinal Wolsey—wrote *Supplication* while abroad. In it, he slyly suggested that the Catholic Church can provide a means of both lessening the load of beggars on the commonwealth and ensuring that the truly needy

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[75] Copland, A4[r].
[76] Simon Fish, *A Supplication of the Poore Commons whereunto is Added the Supplication of Beggers* (London, 1546), C4[r], EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004.

can be cared for, by doing away with parasitic Catholic clergymen and redistributing the Church's vast, hoarded wealth. Copland's sturdy beggars given to vagabondry are replaced by a horde of vagabond clergymen who, neither needy nor ill, have managed to devour a full third of Henry's kingdom:

> Thys moost pestylent myschefe is comen uppon youre sayde poore bedemen, by the reason that there is (in the time of your noble predecessours passed) craftely crepte into thys youre realme an other sorte not of impotent, but... puysaunt and conterfeyt holy, and ye beggers and vagabondes whych syns the tyme of theyr fyrst entre by all the crafte and wylynes of Satan are nowe encreased under your syght not only into a greate nomber, but also into a kyngdome. These are not the herdes, but the ravenous wovlfes goynge in herdes clothynge devowerynge the flocke, the Bysshoppes, Abbates, Pryours, Deacons, Archedeacons, Suffraganes, Prestes, Monkes, Chanons, Friers. Pardonners, and Somners. And who is able to noumber thys ydell ravenouse sorte which (settinge all laboure asyde) have begged so importunatly that they have gotten into theyr handes more then the thyrd parte of all your realme.[77]

In addition to presenting the clergy as wolves devouring the flock, Fish also argued that the clergy further undermined the economy by seducing and ruining English women. He asks the reader, "who is she that wyll set her handes to worke to get thre pens a day, and may have at leste twenty pens a day to slepe an houre wyth a fryer, a monke, or a preeste?"[78] Fish was recording a common complaint against the supposedly celibate Catholic clergy, a charge which, for example, also appeared in *Rede me and be nott Wrothe*:

> Fryers nowe they are the worst of all
> Ruffian wretches and rascall [...]
> Yet they are intollerabil beggars
> Lyvynge on rapine and disceyte
> Worshypfull matrons to begyle
> Honorable virgins to defile.[79]

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[77] Fish, D4^{r}-D4^{v}.
[78] Fish, D4^{r}.
[79] William Barlow, *Rede me and be nott Wrothe* (Strasbourg, 1528), E4^{r}-E4^{v}, EEBO, internet, 10 August, 2004.

Images of lecherous clergymen, whose cloisters were "farre worse then any stewes/ Or comen places of whordom," seducing wives and daughters were meant to manipulate early modern male readers' fears of cuckoldry and shame.[80] Furthermore, these illicit sexual unions were ostensibly said to also have a twofold negative effect on the commonwealth: they dissuaded women from honest labor and they produced unwanted "goods" in the form of bastard children, who, with the help of their fathers, had their own corrosive repercussions for the society:

> No man should knowe his owne chylde that theyr basterdes myght enheryte the possessions of every man to put the ryght begotten children clere besyde theyr inheritaunce in subversion of al estates and godly ordre... wherby al the realme at length (yf it shulde be continued) shal be made desert, and inhabitable.[81]

With the help of their less-than-holy fathers, the bastard children of these unions supplant honest "ryght begotten" offspring, and by subverting the natural order, they rush toward the desertification, or ruin, of England.

With these opinions, it was natural that Fish then conflated corrupt Catholic priests with the pox. The priests became the pockified contagion that has infected England:

> These [whoremongers] be they that have made an hundreth thousande ydel hores in youre realme which wold have gotten theyr lyvinge honestly in the swete of their faces had not their superfluous riches illected them to uncleane lust and ydelnesse. These be they that corrupte the hole generation of mankynd in your realme, that catch the pockes of one woman, and beare it to an other, ye some one of them wyll boste amonge his felowes that he hath medled with an hundreth wymen. These be they that when they have ones drawen mennes wives to such incontinency spende awaye theyr husbandes goodes, make the women to runne awaye from theyr husbandes, ye runne away them selves both with wyfe and gooddes, bring both man wyfe and

[80] Barlow, G4^{r}.
[81] Fish, D3^{v}.

> chyldren to ydelnes, theft, and beggery. [82]

The Catholic clergy blight the community, and Fish viewed them as pimps who actively poxed England medically, morally and most often, economically. They infect the population with syphilis through their excessive lechery, catching "the pockes of one woman" only to "beare it to an other." Rather than serving as teachers and moral examples, they seduce women and promote prostitution. Finally, in addition to eroding the moral fiber and sapping the health of the community by spreading the pox, they drain the economic resources of the commonwealth by producing bastard children and convincing wayward wives to liquidate their husbands' goods in the pursuit of pleasure and their own maintenance.

Skelton, Popular Invective and Proto-Protestant Satire

As opposed to Fisher's theological approach to the pox, both Fish's *Supplication* and Copland's *Hye Way* targeted what might be termed a popular audience. In both their themes and audience, they anticipated the underworld sensationalism of the proto-journalistic works of the Wits in the 1590s. Copland, probably, and Fish, almost certainly, were influenced by John Skelton, whose furious invective invoked the pox in both popular attacks and moralistic attempts at verbal political assassination directed against Cardinal Wolsey. The exact roots of the argument are uncertain, but A. W. Barnes has asserted that:

> Perhaps because Skelton saw Wolsey's rise to power as a threat to the nation or perhaps because he lamented the extravagant trappings with which Wolsey surrounded himself, in the years 1521 and 1522 Skelton aligned himself with the old peerage (especially the Howard family) that saw Wolsey as a threat to its

[82] Fish, D3^{v}.

> influence. As Wolsey committed England to war in France and sought to finance his war by raiding the coffers of London and demanding a war tithe from its citizens, Skelton began attacking the Church hierarchy [...] Though his attacks in "Speke Parott" are thinly veiled, it takes no stretch of the imagination to know that the "crowe" that Skelton called on those "causeles cowardes" to "boldlye plucke" is Wolsey.[83]

Skelton used cruel syphilitic imagery when he railed against Cardinal Wolsey's corruption in what E. K. Chambers termed "one of the most intriguing campaigns of character assassination ever undertaken."[84] In *Why Come ye nat to Courte*, the poet presented Wolsey as a man interested only in worldly pleasure and power:

> Cardynall is promoted,
> Yet with lewde condicyons cotyd,
> As herafter ben notyd,
> Presumcyon and vayne glory,
> Envy, wrath, and lechery,
> Covetys and glotony,
> Slouthfull to do good. (568 – 574)[85]

Skelton vehemently pursued Cardinal Wolsey, whose low birth, high rank and huge temporal power made him a ready subject for satire. Skelton saw the Cardinal as the antithesis of what a Christian clergyman should be. Like later Protestant writers such as Fish, Skelton viewed (or created) the pox as a blazon of sin. In "Why Come Ye," Skelton further described Wolsey as:

> So full of melenecoly,
> With a flap afore his eye,
> Men wene that he is pocky
> Or els his surgeons they lye
> For as afar as the can spy
> By the craft of surgery
> It is manus domini.[86]

According to Skelton, Wolsey's surgeons attested that his melancholy and damaged

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[83] Barnes, 30.
[84] E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 318.
[85] John Skelton, *Why Come ye nat to Courte?* (London, 1545), D2^{v}, EEBO, internet, 5 October, 2004. *Why Come ye* was originally written between 1522 and 1523, but Skelton had been condemning Wolsey and corrupt clergy since *Colyn Clout* in 1519.
[86] Skelton, *Why Come Ye*, D2^{v} -D3^{r}.

eye were marked with the pox by the hand of God. Wolsey's afflictions were not relegated to these two symptoms of divine displeasure:

> He is nowe so overth wart
> And so payned with pangis
> That all his trust hangis
> In Balthasor / whiche heled
> Domingos nose / that was wheled
> That Lumberdes nose meane I
> That standeth yet a wrye
> It was nat heled alderbest
> It standeth somwhat on the west
> I meane Domyngo Lomelyn
> That was wont to wyn
> Moche money of the kynge
> At the cardys and haserdynge
> Balthasor ye helyd domingos nose
> From the puskylde pocky pose
> Now with his gumys of araby
> Hath promised to hele our cardinals eye
> Yet sum surgios put a dout
> Lest he wyll put it clene out
> And make hi lame of his neder limes
> God sende him sorowe for his sines.[87]

As Skelton's verbal assault on Wolsey progressed, it assumed the gossipy, topical nature that would become popular much later in the century with the Wits and verse satirists. Skelton's attacks were not only based on Wolsey's afflicted eye, pains, warts and melancholy, but the news that he has turned to Balthasor, the King's doctor who cured Domingo Lomelyn, for relief. Skelton did not miss the opportunity of Wolsey's appointment with Doctor Balthasor to describe the dangers of the pox treatment which he conjectured might render him blind or lame.

During his lifetime, Skelton's railing style achieved results. According to his own pronouncements he was named poet laureate—the title for a graduate in the faculty of rhetoric—at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Louvain.[88] His accolades were not merely academic, he was also the, presumably absentee, rector of

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[87] Skelton, *Why Come Ye,* D2^{v}.
[88] Barnes, 29.

Diss, since after 1512, he spent most of his life within the confines of the permanent sanctuary of Westminster, where despite his satires—which even included Wolsey's attempt to have Westminster's sanctuary status nullified by papal decree—he remained safe from "the vengeance of Church and State."[89] It is possible that the syphilis Skelton slandered Wolsey with was entirely fictitious; however, his constructions, or the truth behind them, were appropriated as fact by the aristocrats that charged Wolsey with treason. Their formal accusation included the charge that Wolsey either recklessly or intentionally tried to poison Henry VIII with the pox: "he havyng the Frenche pockes presumed to come and breth on the kyng."[90]

Although Skelton was more of a satirist than a religious dissident, his descriptions of Cardinal Wolsey's pockified corruption proved influential among early radical Protestants. William Barlow, an associate of William Tyndale, attacked Wolsey using Skelton's imagery to further his Protestant ends:

> *Wat.*
> He leadeth then a Lutherans lyfe?
> *Jef.*
> O naye for he hath no wyfe
> But whoares that be his lovers.
> *Wat.*
> Yf he use whoares to occupy
> It is grett marvell certaynly
> That he escapeth the Frenche pockes.
> *Jef.*
> He had the pockes with out fayle
> Wherfore people on hym did rayle
> With many obprobrious mockes.[91]

Barlow probably had Skelton in mind when he described Wolsey's railers who attacked the archbishop with "obprobrious mockes" for his pox. He would have appropriated Skelton's poxy gibes in order to portray Wolsey as the archetypal

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[89] Barnes, 30.
[90] Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* (London, 1548), FFF4^{r}, EEBO, internet, 14 August, 2004.
[91] Barlow, D2^{r}-D2^{v}.

irreverent, diseased, corrupt, Catholic clergyman.

Early Pockified Drama

Very early in its history, the pox was viewed as a theatrical disease. This is to say, that its representation was both dramatic and metaphorically loaded. Plays and interludes were an important part of early sixteenth-century English society. Early Tudor plays like *A Preaty Interlude Called Nice Wanton* provided "Protestant, health-giving wisdom," which was "construed in Erasmian, humanistic terms."[92] The pox had first served as a spectacle, not only on the stage, but at that other great early modern venue for examining identity: the carnival. Clark recorded that syphilis was the theme of a costumed, carnival procession in Rouen in 1540 and that such mock triumphal processions with "participants [...] all wearing fools' costumes (the traditional cap with ears), plus the attributes of the syphilitic: swellings, bandages, crutches, and so forth" appeared in French literature of the first half of the sixteenth century.[93] Such displays fictionalized and dramatized the pox, and in such examples, syphilis was the object of laughter rather than fear. In an inverted case of Bakhtinian social understanding of the grotesque, fear of the pox is leveled—brought down with humor so that the anxiety is dispersed with through mockery—rather than being a leveler of human inequalities.

The space of the procession, spectacle, interlude, or play was an important venue for rhetorical exhibition. John Guy has suggested the connection between rhetorical-theatrical exhibition and early Tudor political and law life in his biography of Thomas More:

> Even as a page in Cardinal Morton's household, he [More] had loved to "step" in and out of plays and

[92] Healy, *Fictions,* 146.
[93] Clark, 117.

> entertainments, delivering extempore speeches in fictional and real-life guises. He saw humor as a correlative of the Holy Spirit. He used it to cut people down to size.[94]

More understood the theatricality of Tudor politics; he knew the power of the mimicry and mockery that had allowed Skelton to attack Wolsey with success and impunity.

The Tudor penchant for theatrical display revealed the power of staged pox images in morality plays such as *Nice Wanton.* In *Nice Wanton,* the pox appeared on the stage exhibiting many of its early literary manifestations. It is a morbid, medical curiosity; a scourge of God; leveler of the mighty or beautiful; and a powerful satiric tool. Furthermore, it very much represented a pockified dramatic adaptation of Henryson's poem about the leprous ruin Cresseid. *Nice Wanton* was first performed between 1547 and 1553. The interlude is about three siblings, "twoo naught, and one godlye," and it features syphilis as a punishment for iniquity in a way that instantly calls to mind the fate of Henryson's Cresseid.[95] The two wicked siblings, Ismael and Dalila suffer horrible deaths. Dalila ritualistically confirms her choice of a life of infamy by entering into a sacrilegious parody of the sacrament of marriage with Iniquiti. She becomes a prostitute, and dies in a spital of the pox: a victim of her blasphemous and promiscuous life choices. Ismael is betrayed by the character of Iniquiti and is hung after being convicted as a thief.[96] Barnabas, their unloved, godly sibling, takes care of Dalila in her last days and prevents his mother, Xantippe, from committing suicide when she discovers that her lenience has resulted in the shameful

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[94] John Guy, *Thomas More* (London: Arnold, 2000), 212 .
[95] Anonymous, *A Preaty Interlude Called, Nice Wanton,* (London: 1560), A1^{r}.
[96] Dalila's name is presumably a reference to Samson's treacherous mistress Delilah in Judges 16.4-18, while Ismael, as a criminal, brings to mind Ishmael of Genesis, who is ordained to "live at odds with the rest of his brothers" (*The King James Version,* Genesis 16.2).

death of two of her children.[97]

Ismael and Dalila had more or less run away from school to a life on the streets, and when Barnabas meets Dalila years later, he does not recognize her. The stage directions offer an immediate and strikingly visual explanation: "Dalila. Commeth in ragged, her face hid, or disfigured, haltinge on a staffe."[98] Early modern viewers would have seen Dalila appear and immediately have conjectured that she had the leprosy or pox. They would have also assumed that her poxy punishment was a fitting punishment for her sinful life. St. Paul was often invoked as the authority on lust-induced punishment:

> Saint Paule sayth yf ye lyve after flesshly pleasure delytynge in this ymage ye shal dye ghostly a very yll deth [...] it hathe a foule savoure to them ye hath good tastynge it gendereth pockes and leprousy bothe in body and soule and is so infectyfe that many be dayly in grete jeoperdy to perisshe therby yf they have no helpe and socoure onely of god.[99]

In John Ryckes' *The Ymage of Love,* Paul's use of leprosy was conflated with Early Modern pox as the punishment for illicit sexuality. *Nice Wanton* represented a shift toward the pox standing on its own as a metaphor. Erasmus and several other writers like Ryckes conflated leprosy and syphilis. Henryson, who was writing before the pox was identified, had used venereal leprosy as the sign of lecherous sin in the "body and soule" sense which Ryckes described: the idea that not only the body but the spirit could, as Fisher argued, suffer from the "rustynesse and cankrynge" of "foule sinne."[100] The author of *Nice Wanton* abandoned the leprosy motif cultivated by Henryson as well as the "new leprosy" in which Erasmus directly conflated leprosy's

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[97] It seems likely that the author of *Nice Wanton* was familiar with Erasmus' pox images as well. The character Xantippe appears as the undutiful wife in Erasmus' colloquy, "Marriage" (1523). Xantippe is the Dalila's undutiful mother in *Nice Wanton.* The classical allusion is of course to Socrates' shrewish wife. For more on Xantippe in Erasmus, see Huizinga, 115, 159.

[98] *Nice Wanton,* B1^{v}.

[99] John Ryckes, *The Ymage of Love* (London, 1525), B3^{r}, EEBO, Internet, 17 June, 2004.

[100] Ryckes, B3^{r}; Fisher, B2^{r}.

traditional association of moral uncleanliness with the physical ravages of the syphilis epidemic. By the mid sixteenth century, the pox seems to have been generally understood to have the same medico-moral connotations as leprosy with the added benefit of being a disease caught through lecherous sin. As such it allowed syphilis a remarkable duality: the pox was the product of sexual sin and consumed the body, and the pox was the representation of sin as it devoured the soul. Syphilis had become a physical disease and the embodiment of intangible sin (as well as its effect on the soul). It was both cause and effect: pockifed lecherous sin—the cankers on the soul—spurred people to misdeeds, which were in turn, punished by God in the form of a syphilis infection.

Poxy sin has had a remarkable effect on Dalila. Like Cresseid whose leprosy had made her unrecognizable to Troylus, Dalila is not recognized by her brother. Before Barnabas, whom she recognizes whilst he remains still unaware of her identity, Dalila describes her fate for the benefit of the audience:

> My senowes be shrunken, my flesh eaten w^{t} pocks,
> My bones ful of ache, and great payne,
> My head is bald, that bare yelowe lockes,
> Croked I cree to the earth agayne,
> Mine eie sight is dimme, my hands tremble and shake
> My stomake abhorreth all kind of meate.
> Where I was fayre and amiable of face,
> Now am I foule and horrible to se. (246-255) [101]

The author of *Nice Wanton* voiced many of the same observations that Fisher had more than three decades before, but in greater detail. Her sin "becomes emblazoned on her own body" in the form of the ravages of syphilis.[102] Dalila suffers the pox symptomatic pain in the sinews and bones. She also suffers from alopecia, or syphilis-induced hair loss. Dalila also voices the typical pox complaints of palsy and a sensitive digestive tract.

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[101] Anonymous, *Nice Wanton*, B1^{v}-B2^{r}.
[102] Healy, *Fictions*, 149.

More importantly, Ryckes and many of his contemporaries, including the author of *Nice Wanton,* believed the pox was a punishment delivered unto humankind by an angry God. Dalila offers the opinion: "Al this I have deserved for lacke of grace, justly for my sinnes god doth plague me" (256-257).[103] It is interesting to note that the loss of physical beauty is mentioned by both authors and essentially seems to have suggested a correlation between ugliness and knowledge of sin. Dalila's plague of syphilis directly corresponds to the fate of Henryson's Cresseid. In Dalila's case, the sexual nature of syphilis is more dramatically effective than Cresseid's leprosy-for-blasphemy punishment. Dalila mourns her poxy fate; the loss of her yellow locks and her transformation from beautiful to horrifying is also reminiscent of Fisher's conflation of the loss of beauty with cankerous sin-disease. Nor is this concern with lost beauty superficial: if the ungodly action of pockified sin disfigures the soul, then the punishment for lecherous sin equitably disfigures the body. It would seem that the beauty of the unblemished body, made in God's image, suggests not only a wholesomeness of physical but also, moral health. Likewise, deformity, disfiguration and illness suggest that both body and soul are defaced. Healy, in discussing the morality play, *Marie Magdalene* (1567), comments on this phenomenon, in which the character, Knowledge of Sinne, "is, in fact, an embodiment of the Pox and of the fate that awaits her [Marie] if she continues to prostitute her body."[104] In a similar sense, Dalila's pox is also a characterization of knowledge of sin. Through the pox, Dalila is marked and made aware of her sin, a process which leads to her salvation.

The Pox Endangered (1560-1590)

Paradoxically, just after the pox metaphor began to solidify in its meaning—as

[103] Anonymous, *Nice Wanton,* B2^{r}.
[104] Healy, *Fictions,* 149.

a generally recognized image of corruption that was independent of but allied to leprosy—its development faltered. Between 1560 and 1590, the history of the pox metaphor became uncertain. Up until 1560, the pox was a major literary issue. As I have discussed, it appeared in medical, religious, and literary works, and several of the greatest minds of the early sixteenth century addressed the disease. Authors like Erasmus found the pox to be a serious social concern while Rabelais and Skelton discovered in the disease a powerful satirical weapon. Copland and Fish found the pox a titillating aspect of underworld voyeurism, while Fisher found syphilis to be a great image for corruption and sin in his religious writings. However, after 1560 and until 1590, the disease became far less prevalent as an image. Even the radical Protestant writers of the period, such as Stephen Gosson and the pseudonymous group of Martin Marprelate and his circle, who would have benefited from poxy metaphors in their descriptions of decay and corruption, used what appeared to be pox-inspired imagery, but they failed to employ clear syphilis references.[105]

This is not to say that the pox metaphor completely disappeared in the years between 1560 and 1590; however, references to the disease were far less common, especially when compared to the profusion of syphilis writings in the last decade of the century. The pox remained in print in medical works, such as those by William Clowes, who published the first book on syphilis written in English. Clowes combined medical observations of syphilis with moralizing sermons on vice and corruption—a poxy medical version of the Protestant writers' satire.[106] Much of the diminution of the metaphor may well be a result of sociological and pathogenic

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[105] There are of course exceptions to this rule. In his 1579 publication, *A Gaping Gulf Whereinto England Is Like to be Swallowed by Another French Marriage,* Philip Stubbes equated Catholicism with the pox in his brazen criticism of Elizabeth's intended marriage to Alençon. See Chapter 4, 156.

[106] See William Clowes' medico-moral syphilis work: *A Short and Profitable Treatise,* (London, 1579). For a brief discussion on Clowes' influence on the metaphor, see: Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 37-40.

factors. In the late fifteenth century, the pox was considered a new disease, and as such, it was a matter of some fear and fascination. By the mid sixteenth century, the disease was no longer a novelty. Furthermore, there is evidence that the first wave of the disease—the period of malignant syphilis—had come to an end.[107] These two factors contributed to the diminishment of the pox in literature, and had the trend continued, the pox metaphor might have disappeared had it not been for the Wits who reintroduced the pox into the forum of popular literature in the late sixteenth century.

At the end of the century, the pox would make an astonishing return. Anna Foa missed the importance of Erasmus' pox writings and their relationship with education and the development of satire. Through the whole of the century, including the quiet period, reprints and translations of poxy texts by influential writers from the continent were popular imprints among London printers. Erasmus, for example, was extremely popular, and his works were appearing both in their original Latin and as translations.[108] The enormous influence of these poxy humanist texts was beginning

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[107] Critics, such as Ann Foa, have argued that "leprosy... usurped the symbolic valence of syphilis." Ann Foa, "The New and the Old: The Spread of Syphilis (1494 – 1530)," *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspectives: Selections from the Quaderni Storici,* eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 41. Foa is only partially correct in her assumption that syphilis imagery appears briefly the texts of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries before it is engulfed by the ancient corruption metaphors associated with leprosy. In the early years of the sixteenth century, syphilis was a common topic, especially in religious and medical works; however, by the mid sixteenth century, after publications of victims' accounts, religious admonitions and the humanists' poxy social concerns, much of the interest in the pox dissipated. Up to this point, syphilis had appropriated much of leprosy's social currency, but perhaps as a result of the decline of malignant syphilis, the pox becomes less of a topic. Foa looked no further than this diminishment of the disease and the corresponding, but temporary, diminution of the metaphor that occurred in the middle of the sixteenth century. Healy has since argued against Foa's assertion: "with its [syphilis'] prominent skin lesions and chronic progress, the new disease readily inherited the traditions surround the old, rapidly disappearing sickness, leprosy." Healy, "Contagious Bodies," 160.

[108] One hundred editions of the *Colloquies* had been printed by the time of Erasmus' death. Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence,* trans. J.C. Grayson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 164. A search of The *English Short Title Catalogue* indicates that there are one hundred and fifty-three existing editions of Erasmus' works published in England between 1500 and 1570. A large number of these are in translation, and several explicitly involve Erasmus' poxy discussions. See for example: *A Very Pleasaunt and Fruitful Diologue Called the Epicure,* Trans. Philip Gerrard (London, 1545), EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004; Desiderius Erasmus, *A Delcamation Made by Erasmus,* trans. Richard Sherry, (London, 1550), EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004; *A Mery Dialogue, Declaryng the Properties of Shrowde Shrewes and Honest Wives,* trans. anonymous (London, 1557), EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004; *A Modest Means to Marriage,* trans. Nicolas Leigh (London, 1568), EEBO, Internet, 29 August, 2004.

to be felt. *Nice Wanton,* for example, strongly reflects Erasmus' concerns. In a 1568 translation of Erasmus' treatise on education entitled *A Declamation,* Richard Sherry shared with English readers the image of a similarly-fated family:

> Daily are in our eies the examples of citizens, whome the evyll maners of theyr chyldren have brought to beggarye, whome eyther the sonne beyng hanged, or theyr daughter an whoore of the stewes, have tormented wyth intollerable shame and vylany. I know greate men, whych of manye chyldren have scante one lefte alyve. One consumed wyth the abhominable leprie, called by diminucion ye French pockes, beareth his death aboute wyth hym: a nother hathe burste by drynkynge for the beste game, an other goyng a whorehuntynge in the nyghte with a visar, was pitifullye kylled. What was the cause? Bycause theyr parentes thynkynge it inough to have begotten them, and enryched them, toke no heede of theire bryngynge up. They shall dye by the lawe, whych laye awaye theyr children, and cast them into some wood to be devoured of wylde beastes. But there is no kynde of puttynge them awaye more cruell, then to geve up that to beastlye affeccions, whych nature hath geven to be fashioned by very good waies.[109]

Sherry's translation of Erasmus' *A Declamation* reveals a family very much like the one featured in *Nice Wanton.* The son was executed, like Ismael, and the daughter was a prostitute, like Dalila. He described another family in which the children are a syphilitic, an alcoholic who drank himself to death, and a whoremonger who was killed in a street brawl. It seems likely that the author of *Nice Wanton* may have condensed and dramatised Erasmus' cautionary tale while combining it with Cresseid's lamentable fate. Conversely, perhaps, Sherry had *Nice Wanton* in mind when he was translating *A Declamation.*

Erasmus was concerned with the creation of a superior Christian state, and his many social concerns reflect this goal. Preventing pockified marriages and providing for the proper education of children were part of his vision. Poxed parents, as

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[109] Erasmus, *A Declamation*, E2^{v}.

Petronius and Gabriel discovered, will make feeble families.[110] An improper or incomplete moral education created immoral children that took risks and as a result, caught the pox. Erasmus who had designed the *Colloquies* "for young people as help in the teaching of Latin" had produced a work that would prove to be extremely influential: "above all in England and the Lutheran part of Germany, the *Colloquies* had a great influence."[111] Even as syphilis itself was probably becoming less of a health issue, Erasmus' pockified satiric approach was being discovered by a broad readership. The growing appetite for literature would give rise to protojournalistic satire. In this environment groups, like the University Wits and the verse satirists—raised on a diet of Erasmian *Colloquies*; tantalized by the fame of Rabelais, and aware of the English pox tradition of the first half of the sixteenth century—would find in the pox metaphor a fitting paradigm for their rapidly changing world.

[110] In the first half of the sixteenth century, syphilis' congenital nature was known: "this was a disease which the sins of the fathers were visited on the children: reduced fertility, abnormal births and sickly offspring were all accurately connected with this particular infection." Healy, "Contagious Bodies," 160-161.

[111] Augustijn, 164.

Figure 1: "Madonna." Woodcut. Mary presides over pox sufferers while offering a crown to Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor. Simultaneously, the baby Jesus looks with pity and an outstretched healing hand toward to female pox sufferers.[1]

[1] Joseph Grünpeck, *Tractatus de Pestilentiali Scorra sive Mala de Franzos* (Augsburg, 1496), internet, online, http://www.nd.edu/~dhayton/diss/chap4.html, 28 November, 2004.

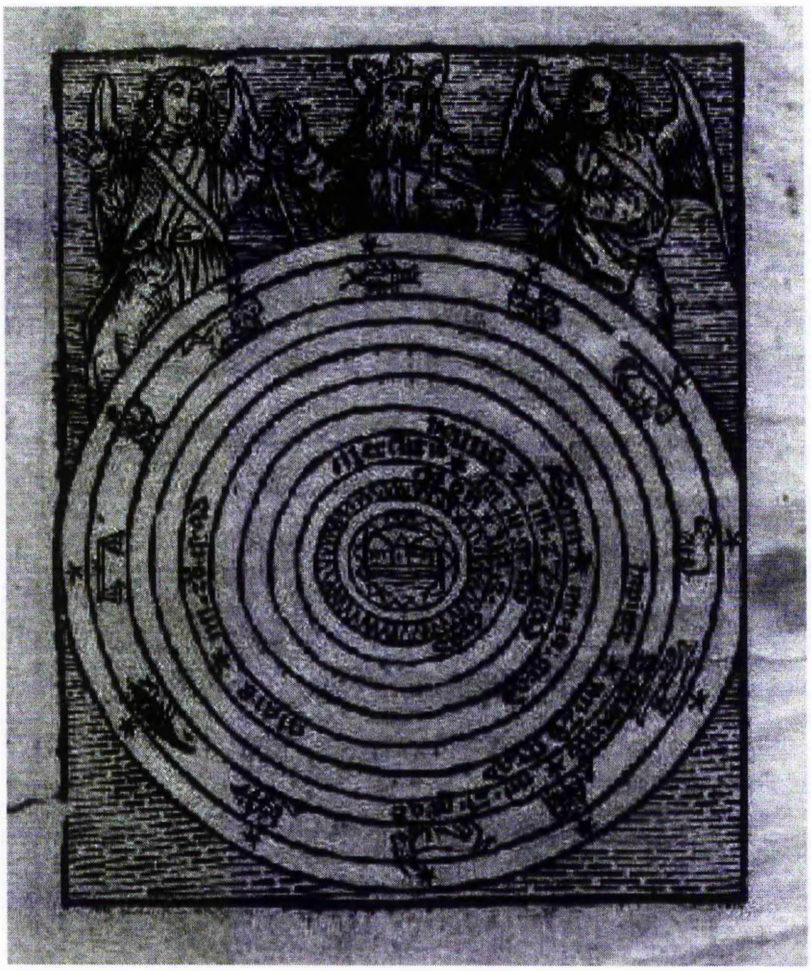

Fig. 2: "Jesus and Angels over the Heavens."[2] This woodcut from an early German translation of Grünpeck's *French Evil* shows Jesus and two angels presiding over the heavenly spheres. The image is important because it reveals the relationship between astrology, classical gods and Christianity. The planets are named after gods in the classical pantheon who they are said to embody. In Renaissance astrology these god-planets were imagined as part of a mechanical construct—the heavenly spheres—which God ruled over. If the spheres were in harmony, then all was right in the world. If they were in discord—exemplified by astrological events like eclipses, comets and planetary conjunctions—horrible disasters such as the advent of new diseases could be expected.

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[2] Joseph Grünpeck, *Ein hubscher Tractat von dem Ursprung des Bösen Franzos* (Nuremberg, 1497), internet, online, http://www.countway.harvard.edu/rarebooks/exhibits/fifteeners/fifteeners4.html, 28 November, 2004.

Fig. 2: "The Syphilitic" by Albrecht Dürer.[3] There is a model of the heavens over the syphilitic's head with the date 1484. Grünpeck and other proponents of an astrological origin of syphilis found its cause in a conjunction of planets under the sign of Scorpio.

[3] Albrecht Dürer, "The Syphilitic," (Nuremburg, 1496), internet, online, http://www2.mmlc.nwu.edu/c303/comm/dure-94.html, 28 November, 2004.

Fig. 3: "*Nupta Contagioso*," or "Wife to an Infected Man." Alciatus' emblem is a visual interpretation of Erasmus' Mezentius-inspired image that appeared in the "A Marriage in Name Only."[4]

[4] Andreas Alciatus, *Emblematum Libellus* (Lyon, 1551), *Koninklijke Bibliotheek*, online, internet, 29 August, 2004.

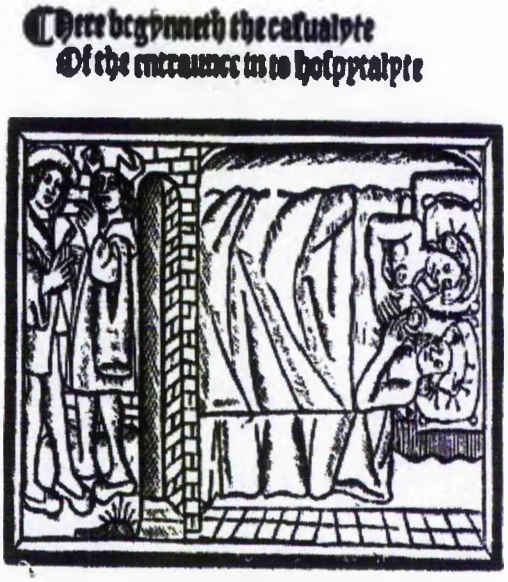

Fig. 4: "Here Begynneth the Casualyte of Entraunce into the Hospytalyte."[5] Woodcut. Copland and the porter stand at the door of the spital. Inside, a nude couple frolic in bed. Both Copland's poem and this particular image exploits feelings of prejudice against the poor and reveal a juvenile rebellion against the Christian injunction to provide charity by implying that it is misspent on lecherous, lazy, criminal vagabonds. The pox in Copland's poem serves to blazon the needy with a visible sign their sins.

[5] Robert Copland, *The Hye Way to the Spyttell Hous* (London, 1536), A3^{r}, *EEBO*, online, 15 September, 2004.

Fig. 5: "Tantalus."[6] Like Greene, Alciatus finds inspiration in the myth of Tantalus as a means of describing the fate of a glutton both on earth and in the afterlife. Tantalus was trapped in a stream in Hades with fruit over his head and cool, clear water around his torso, but he was constantly tortured by hunger and thirst. When he reached for the fruit, it retreated from his hands, and when stooped to drink the water receded from his lips—so surrounded by plenty, he goes without. Greene seems to also be inspired by this image in his illustration of Roberto's gluttony. While he claims "for my gluttony, I suffer hunger: for my drunkenness, thirst" he also adds "for my adultery, ulcerous sores." Roberto's punishments can be read as both a confession of his sins and also a description of the hardships of early modern London life for the professional writer, surrounded by plenty but going without. In this life, Roberto, who admitted that financial need led him to the playhouses, may also be arguing that his hunger and thirst is the economic consequence of his spendthrift ways and his poxy "ulcerous sores" are the result of his investment in illicit sex.

[6] Alciatus, online.

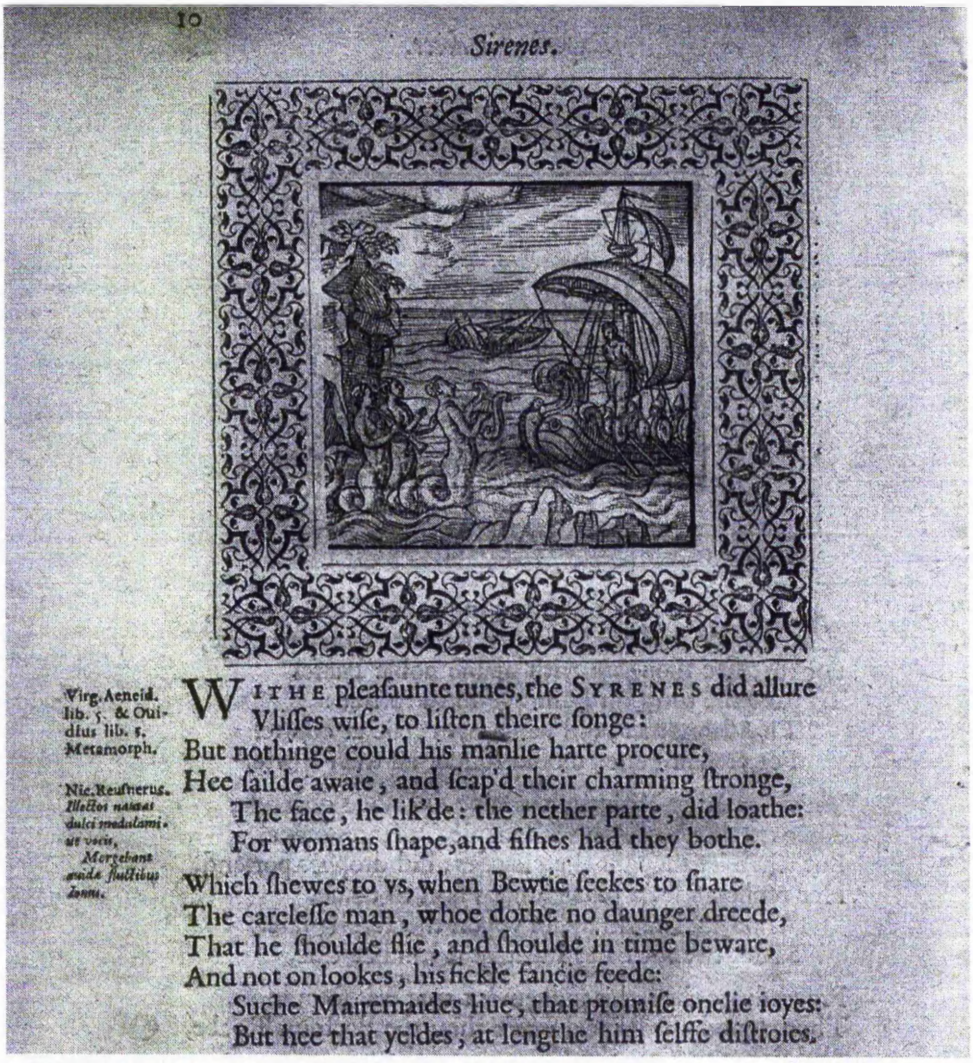

Fig 6: "Syrenes"[7] Whitney's emblem uses the Homeric image of Ulysses tied to the mast and sailing past the sirens. Like Greene's subsequent description, women are viewed as fundamentally dangerous: they seek to entrap men with their beauty and destroy them with what is below. Whereas Whitney has maintained Homer's image of the Siren's as being dangerous half-fish, Greene has emphasized the overtly sexualized and pockified "nether parte" of women.

[7] Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leyden, 1586), *Pennsylvania State University Emblem Libraries,* online, 1 October, 2004.

Fig. 7: "Satyr."[8] Alciatus' representation of a satyr is a wild, bearded, horned man on top and a goat below.

[8] Alciatus, online.

Fig. 8: *Ficta Religioso,*" or "False Religion," represented as the Whore of Babylon.[9] In the early modern period, the Whore of Babylon represented attraction and destruction. In Aciatus' image, she is a beautiful woman who is representing the attractiveness of false religion, but her steed, a horrid beast, is representative of her true source (hell) and the damnation that follows succumbing to her seduction. In a similar sense, the verse satirists also use Whore of Babylon imagery to represent attraction and destruction, but their images often are straight-forward: the Whore of Babylon is the poxy poisonous result of illicit sexuality.

[9] Alciatus, online.

Fig. 9: "The Coynesse of a Whore."[10] In 1591, Paradin presents an image which is allied to and prefigures that of the verse satirist's painted women. Borrowed from Proverbs 11, Paradin's emblem depicts the honor of a shameless woman as a gold ring in a pig's snout. In a similar sense, the verse satirists present images of bold, attractive, sexualized women who conceal poxy horrors beneath their finery. Both images address themes of hypocrisy and dissimulation in which false honor, defended by deception, reveals a disappointing truth. By the time of the verse satirists this truth is not only disappointing but dangerous and syphilitic.

[10] Claude Paradin. *The Heroicall Devises of M. Claudius Paradin,* trans. P.S. William Kearney (London, 1591), *Pennsylvania State University Emblem Libraries,* online, 1 October, 2004.

Fig. 10: "Where Hellen is, there will be Warre; For, Death and Lust, Companions are."[11]
By 1635, George Wither's emblem equates Helen's sexuality with death: "where Helen is, Troyes fate will bee," just as Thersites finds poxy death the fitting punishment for all who war for a placket (2.3.18).[12]

[11] George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), *Pennsylvania State University Emblem Libraries,* online, 1 October, 2004.
[12] Wither, online.

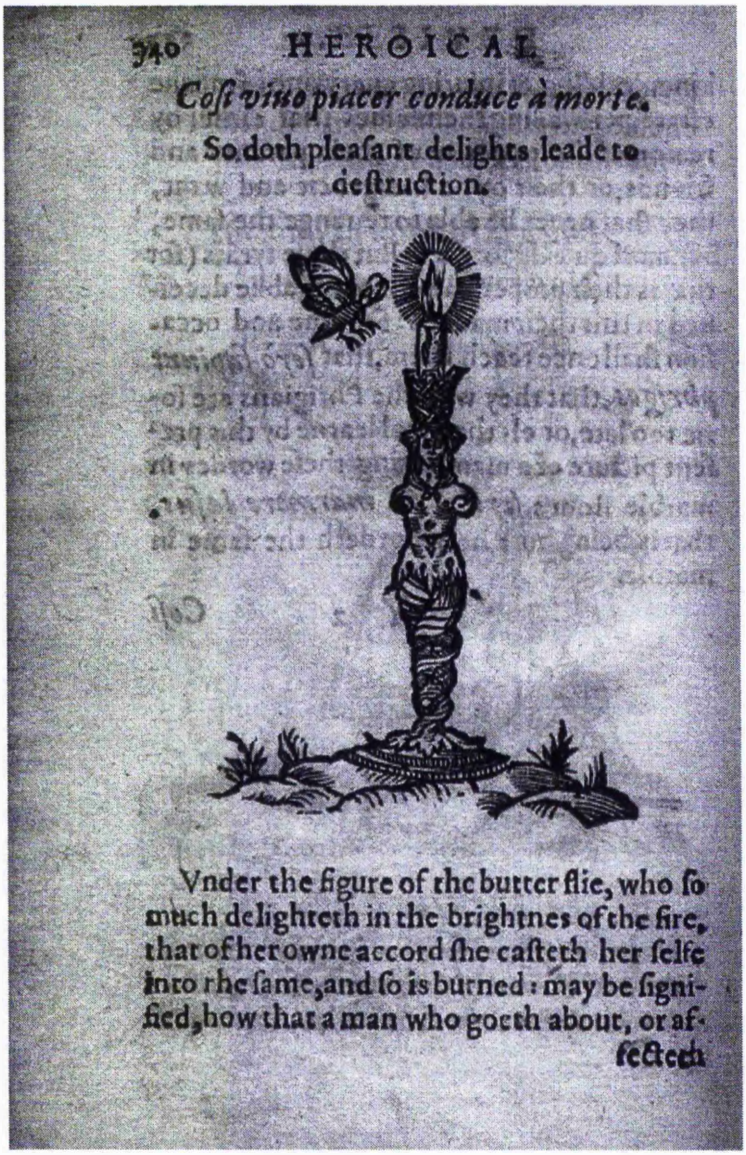

Fig. 11: "So doth Pleasant Delights lead to Destruction"[13] Paradin equates a moth attracted to a burning candle on a caryatid candlestick to a man attracted to pleasure. The moths' delight in the destructive flame is similar to a man's predilection for sensual pleasures—both moth and man will get burned. Burning by the pox, such as in Timon's injunction to Phrynia and Timandra, constituted one of the most common euphemisms for catching sexually transmitted disease.

[13] Paradin, online.

Fig. 12: "The Profit of One is the Disprofite of Another"[14] Paradin's image of a serpent swallowing another serpent to become a dragon represents an example of a pessimistic early modern English response to the rapid commercialization of society. This is an understanding which Timon has learned: that rich men only become rich by the loss of others. Timon's gift-giving is meant to be part of a traditional social exchange, but instead, his parasite friends are there, not to build social ties, but for their own profit.

[14] Paradin, online.

CHAPTER 4

The Pox and the Rise of Popular Print

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, the pox metaphor reappeared in English popular literature with dramatic effect. Its importance in the works of popular satirical authors was a natural outgrowth of satirical discontent coupled with the traditional Elizabethan body-centered episteme. To early moderns sexual sin was both a chief evil and a sign of general corruption: "there is no sinne [...] comparable" to "whoredom."[1] Images derived from bodies, as well as bodily ailments, systems and functions were commonly used to describe the activities of the state, a characteristic that Jonathan Gil Harris described as the "organic political analogy."[2] Margaret Healy has already established that the pox had pride-of-place in this analogy, when she suggested that as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, the pox was "intimately connected with surfeiting, lechery and criminal activities," and that it "emerges as a product of disordered, intemperate living: bodily and social disorder converge."[3] Because the pox was believed to rot the body, it was applied to political and social images of corruption—to illustrate the decay of the body politic. Furthermore, it was not limited to sexual excess or corruption: "sexual defilement carries with it all other forms of pollution."[4] As a result, the pox was a primary trope within this system, and it became an image of corruption associated with dysfunctional consumption of individuals and the commonwealth.

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[1] Stubbes, H4[r].
[2] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1.
[3] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 131
[4] Lorraine Helms, "The Saint in the Brothel, or Eloquence Rewarded," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41.3 (1990), 322.

The complex pox metaphor and all of its attendant medical, social, and political significance that Healy identified in Jacobean drama was undeniably different from the often simplistic pox-as-punishment imagery of the early sixteenth century. Healy's poxy persona of the early seventeenth century was: "'the living Death:' a perfumed foreigner (usually French, Spanish, or Italian) being slowly consumed by his disease, crouching in the 'hams' (a submissive, pleading posture), given to lechery, and succumbing to the Venuses of the bawdy houses."[5] However, it was during the burst of satirical literature of the 1590s, rather than during the Jacobean era, as both Healy and Harris have suggested, that the metaphor—and the poxy persona—which had been evolving for the last century, came to maturity.

While Healy has identified the pox in the works of Erasmus and some early and middle sixteenth-century English writers, in *Sick Economies,* Harris only looked at one poxy work from the 1590s—*The Comedy of Errors*—before he turned his attention towards seventeenth-century pox writings. Both scholars have largely ignored the extremely fertile period of the 1590s when the pox metaphor reemerged and developed into the powerful form that they have identified in the Jacobean period. Late sixteenth-century satirical authors' innovation of the pox metaphor constituted one of the most important stages in the development of the metaphor and what should arguably be the foundation of any discussion of seventeenth-century pox writings. Extended pox metaphors in the works of Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe illustrate the connections that were being formed between syphilis, gender perception, foreign relations and market economies in hopes of addressing "the much neglected commercial and aesthetic aspects of 'pocky' body deployments" that Healy has

[5] Margaret Healy, "'Seeing' Contagious Bodies in Early Modern England," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 159.

tentatively identified.[6] In *Foreign Bodies*, Harris has pointed out the "pathologizations of 'noxious' foreign commodities" in reference to Hobbes' *Leviathan.*[7] In both *Foreign Bodies* and *Sick Economies* he recognized this trend as early as Gerard de Malaynes' *Treatise of the Canker of England's Commonwealth* (1601).[8] However, the pockifying of foreign commodities was thriving long before in the works of the Wits when Greene and Nashe were making the pox a fundamental part of the conflation of corruption and consumption.

Radical Protestants and the Rise of the Wits: 1560-1590

The development of the pox metaphor not only paralleled the increasing penchant for satire on the part of the Elizabethan readership, but more than any other disease, syphilis shaped the development of the genre. Satire and the pox flourished in the late Elizabethan conflation of consumption and corruption. The return of syphilis as an important literary topic in the late sixteenth century can to some extent be linked to Erasmus' influence on Renaissance pedagogy and the humanists' interest in Menippean satire.[9] Furthermore, radical Protestant propaganda helped create a demand for railing satire, and the Menippean trickster would provided both radical Protestants and the Wits with a means of examining and criticizing the dangerous social conditions that fomented comparisons between corruption and consumption.

As previously noted, in the early sixteenth century, the pox had been the weapon of choice for many theopolitical pundits and when the disease began to reappear in writing at the end of the century, it returned in the context of this genre.

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[6] Healy, *Fictions,* 153.
[7] Harris, *Foreign Bodies,* 143.
[8] Harris, *Foreign Bodies,* 143.
[9] Healy stressed the importance of the use of Erasmus' works such as the *Colloquies,* as grammar school texts in the pockifying of Jacobean literature. She convincingly argued that schoolboys in sixteenth-century England were influenced by Erasmus' social concerns and that some of these students would adapt the same issues to the stage. Furthermore, she identified Shakespeare as one of the impressionable pupils who created Erasmus-inspired pockified writings. Healy, *Fictions,* 139-140.

Among other famous Protestant writings, the Marprelate controversy and the Wits' state-sponsored backlash played an inadvertent but crucial role in both popularizing satire in the last quarter of the century and simultaneously propelling syphilis into the forefront of disintegration metaphors.[10] In the late 1580s, Martin Maprelate inadvertently reawakened satire as a popular genre by "yoking a rhetoric of festive abuse and popular comedy to the serious purposes he sought to accomplish; attempts by the episcopacy to respond in a style of dignified admonition were not only ineffective but virtually ludicrous."[11] While Marprelate tapped into carnivalesque and satirical traditions, the writers involved did not dwell on pox images. The Marprelate controversy became important to the rise of the Elizabethan popular pox metaphor in that it reawakened an appetite for satirical discourse and, coincidentally, drove the archbishops to sponsor the early efforts of pockified writers like Nashe.

Even if Maprelate was not a pox writer, the tradition of religious invective had found inspiration in pox metaphors ever since the West became conscious of the disease; this tradition was further revitalized when theopolitical writers seized Erasmus' metaphors of pox and corruption in the first half of the sixteenth century:

> Those discontented with the Roman Church seized on its political potential. Religious upheaval thus left its imprint on the social construction of syphilis: the decay and slow death of the body it caused, and its strong association with hypocrisy, were for some, and notably for Erasmus, analogous to what was happening to the Christian community.[12]

Erasmus' association of the pox with moral and religious-political corruption produced some of the most resonant and widely-read pox images. In addition to Erasmus, Protestant writers found inspiration in polemical or reform-minded English

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[10] Nicholl gives some background of the Marprelate controversy and discusses the role that Nashe played. See Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 62-79.
[11] Jonathan V. Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 31.
[12] Healy, *Fictions,* 141.

writings from the earliest years of the sixteenth century that exhibited similar tropes of poxy corruption. In *A Discoverie of J. Nicols Minister* by the English-born Jesuit missionary, Robert Parsons responded to Protestant minister John Nichol's charges that Cardinals practiced sodomy, whoremongering and the pox:

> Your Cardinales, the pillars of your churche. Have not they bewtifull boyes, with whome they committ the sinne of Sodome, as I have harde by the Romans, and by a gentelman whoe served to Cardinal Sfoisie, who travailed by land with me from the cittie of Ancona to Venice? have not these younge Cardinales pretye wenches in their palaces, whome in the daye time they cal ether their sisters or cosins, and in the night time make them ether their bedfelowes or concubins? And doe you not knowe, how that there was a younge Cardinale, a Prince, burnte at Rome not longe since, by a common queane of the stewes, and tooke from her the frenche disease wherwith he dyed miserablye. This is John Nicols uncleane accusation of ye Cardinals, grounded only (as you see) uppon a bare interrogation, which alwayes may be answered just siciently with a No.[13]

Parsons was attempting to counter the popular Protestant attacks that linked Roman Catholicism to foreignness, false religion, vice and syphilis. One such Protestant attack entitled *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf Whereinto England Is Like to be Swallowed by Another French Marriage* (1579) was written by the Puritanical Inns of Court gentleman, Philip Stubbes. Stubbes, who feared that the proposed marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Alençon, might initiate an English return to Catholicism, unreservedly criticized Elizabeth's intention to marry the French Duke in a xenophobic diatribe in which "he equates Catholicism with syphilis."[14] Later, writers like the Wits appropriated the pox metaphor for their own both ostensibly didactic and overtly sensationalistic and voyeuristic writings. The Wits would pay homage to Erasmus and More, and some, such as Nashe, believed that these authors provided a "precedent for the kind of humanistic satire he aspired to

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[13] Robert Parsons, *A Discoverie of J. Nicols Minister* (London: 1581), E1^{r}-E1^{v}, EEBO, internet, 31 October 2004.
[14] Richard Berleth, *The Twilight Lords* (1978; New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1994), 28.

write himself."[15]

The Marprelate controversy had surfaced at the end of the 1580s. Martin Marprelate was the pseudonym of a radical Protestant writer or group of writers, who have never definitively been identified. Martin and his fellow writers wrote extremely virulent attacks against the Church of England, and their angry satire—for its crude virtuosity as well as its message—became popular. After gaining control of the stationer's office, Archbishop Whitgift aroused Protestant ire by censoring radical Protestant texts. He and his colleagues now sought to defend the Church of England from the radical Protestants' reprisals which took the form of guerilla warfare via the publication of illegal pamphlets. They soon discovered they were unequal to the task of rebutting the attacks; as a result, they hired professional writers that could meet and exceed the Puritans' wit and virulence. It is more than likely that John Lyly, Thomas Nashe and possibly Robert Greene responded to the bishops' call, and they were successful in creating popular counter-Puritan literature.

Convention and Innovation

By the time that the Marprelate controversy dissolved under formidable pro-state literary attacks in conjunction with the incarceration and execution of members of Martin's suspected circle, the Wits had learned some invaluable lessons. Their skirmishes with Martin had taught them the prerequisites of a new kind of popular literature. The tradition of religious invective that Martin embraced was described by Stephen Hilliard as "the crucible of modern prose."[16] Lyly, Nashe and the other state-sponsored writers found themselves both out of a job but also the inheritors of a new

[15] Stephen Hilliard, *The Singularity of Thomas Nashe* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 133.
[16] Hilliard, 34.

popular genre, often classified as Menippean satire.[17] Traditional religious invective, a flair for the grotesque and classical scholarship came together in the popular writers' conception of *satura,* which celebrated teeming diversity of styles and content united by the activity of the trickster character who, since classical times, was associated with the physical, the corporeal and the appetitive.[18]

The University Wits took the Menippean style that they had honed in their skirmishes with the radical Protestants and added both classical and contemporary thematic and stylistic elements to address contemporary concerns. The pox was an important part of this process. The Wits often used syphilis imagery in a traditional manner: as punishment from God, a term of abuse or a sign of moral degradation; however, they were able to present a fresh and innovative approach through the medium of the Menippean genre and its trickster persona-narrator. Through proto-journalistic popular writing, the Wits applied conventional arguments and images that criticized social decay.[19] However, the Wits also innovatively exploited the parodic value of a style which was rooted in moral condemnation but had paradoxically become the genre of "informers and monopolists."[20] Hutson, in her study, *Thomas Nashe in Context,* discovered that popular diatribes against immoral consumption were often requests "for revenue in the unmistakable idiom of the reforming idealism," and "what was persistently represented in discourse as a moral crusade in the interests of reforming the commonwealth, was increasingly becoming in practice a

[17] Menippean satire is quite difficult to define. Lorna Hutson defines the genre as festive, diverse and grotesque; furthermore, it is often a mixture of verse and prose and is often dominated by a trickster figure who acts as a narrator. The Wits' Menippean satire had been long in the making. Lorna Hutson says that Menippean satire of the Lucianic tradition was "inherited from the ancients and employed by such humanist writers as Erasmus, More, Rabelais, Ulrich von Hutten and Cornelius Agrippa." Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989), 124-125.
[18] Hutson, *Context*, 124-125.
[19] For a discussion on convention in early modern protojournalistic writing, see Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), or R. D. Bedford, *Dialogues with Convention* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 1-22.
[20] Hutson, 189.

major source of income for the magistrates and nobleman" who were seeking the award of fines and monopolies designed to curb consumption.[21] As a result, a great number of moralistic pamphlets were, in fact parasitical: their end was profit rather than correction, and their morality a hypocritical ploy to pursue gain. Nashe and the Wits parodied this style of corrective pamphlet. "Under the banner of moral Reformation," the Wits would exploit vices and foibles in their flytings by creating caricatures and topical sketches of vice-ridden Londoners that condemned "the various 'abuses' and 'deceits' of English manufacture, or the over-consumption of foreign luxuries (particularly in 'proud' apparel), on gluttony in meats and drinks and vicious idleness of frequenting taverns, theatres and other places of recreation" in a style that constitutes a "grotesque dismemberment of the political reclassifying of deadly sins in the interests of economic individuality."[22]

The Wits had learned a great deal from Martin: they discovered anger and vehemence were marketable. As a result, they often wrote from a standpoint of moral condemnation: they promised to reveal the outrages and abuses of their fellows. While vices were ostentatiously reprimanded with harsh invective, popular writers of the late 1590s tantalized their readers with the very vices which they were condemning.[23] Vice itself remained a fascinating subject for the Elizabethan reader. One suspects that though authors almost universally wrote from a possibly parodic position of moral condemnation, they marketed their works to readers who would experience a certain vicarious thrill in the forays, debauches, swindles and the grotesque life of these sexualized, and often pockified, literary impressions of the London underworld. The vicarious aspects of the satire of moral outrage are further

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[21] Hutson, 182-183.
[22] Hutson, *Context,* 180.
[23] According to Healy, even pox writings had an erotic charge: "Staged dialogues about sex [...] carried an erotic charge, which is only increased by their venereal disease content. Desire accompanied by expressions of anxiety and danger [...] has significant erotic potential." Healy, *Fictions,* 172.

revealed by the popularity of accounts concerning famous real-life figures, such as clowns, criminals, players and authors.

Pockified Author-Character Interplay

The Wits, in their experiments with the mutability of authors and personas, found themselves becoming integrated into the London underworld mythologies that they recorded. Nashe, Greene, Peele and Marlowe were all renowned for their exploits: amorous, gluttonous, rebellious, Dionysian, witty or otherwise. Regardless of whether these exploits were real or fictional, underworld literature was very much related to satire and the satirists. Satire helped to produce and consolidate the examples of immorality that are mocked amongst its pages, and in this context, the Wits both presented and reflected a vision of a London that becomes increasingly identified with pocky consumption and corruption.

The Wits often found themselves caught up in the sins that they exposed for the entertainment of their readership. The very act of professional writing associated them with the marginalized, and pamphlet writing was considered particularly disreputable:

> Even in its late sixteenth-century usage, the word pamphlet was deprecatory. Pamphlets were small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time. As the form of the pamphlet emerged, the name given to it was, like "Puritan," an insult.[24]

If pamphlets were disreputable, those that wrote such works were considered equally marginal. In cataloging the similarities between modern and classical authors, Francis Meres conjured parallel images of excess and disease in both eras:

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[24] Raymond, 10.

> As Anacreon died by the pot: so George Peele by the pox.
> As Archesilaus Prytanoeus perished by wine at a drunken feast, as Hermippus testifieth in Diogenes: so Robert Greene died of a surfet taken at Pickeld Herrings, and Rhenish wine, as witnesseth Thomas Nash, who was at the fatall banquet.[25]

Palladis Tamia reveals that two of the Wits had recently died in sinful and scandalous circumstances; furthermore, Peele's lechery and Greene's gluttony had become part of London literary legend. George Peele had died in 1596, just two years before the publication of *Wits Treasury*, and Meres is attributing his demise to the pox. His disease and death would have been considered the well-deserved punishment for a lecherous life. Greene had also recently passed away in 1592, "dissolute and atheist by his own admission."[26] Meres seemed to be rather partial to Nashe and did not mention him in conjunction with any sort of excesses; however, Nashe, like the other Wits, was often popularly depicted as something of a rogue.[27]

At the time of Meres' writing, Nashe had fled London to escape imprisonment for his role in the writing the lost play, *Ile of Dogges* (1597). At the outset of his career when he was a state-sponsored writer, Nashe, through the Pasquill persona, boasted of his upstanding conformity by saying that "hee acknowledgeth the least Magistrate in the Land to be Lord of his tongue," however, this claim would prove to be somewhat wide of the truth.[28] The *Ile of Dogges* was not the first incident in which his exuberance in pushing literary limits beyond the pale of social and political mores aroused the attention of public authorities. His role in the writing of the lost play, *Terminus et non Terminus,* aroused the ire of the Cambridge dons in 1586/7

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[25] Francis Meres , "Poetrie; Poets; and A Comparative discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets," *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* (London, 1598), 2O6^{v}.
[26] Hilliard, 193.
[27] Rather than castigating him for immorality, Meres entreated that Nashe be recalled from exile, see, *Wits Treasury*, 2O6^{r}-2O6^{v}.
[28] Thomas Nashe, *Pasquill and Marforius,* from *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 98.

while he was still at university. In 1592, he anonymously wrote *Choise of Valentines*, an explicit example of early English erotic literature that, in the gossip printed by pamphleteers of the next several years, was known as "Nashe, his Dildo."[29] In 1593, he was jailed at Newgate for offending London municipal authorities in *Christs Teares over Jerusalem.* In 1599, all satire and expressly the works by Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey were banned. In conjunction with Nashe's roguery, it was also said that he was poxed: both Richard Lichfield and Harvey claimed that he was infected with syphilis.[30]

These claims do not mean that Nashe was actually a syphilitic, but rather, that the pox was used as an insult and as a means of creating a disreputable character image. In the case of Lichfield, he was probably returning the pocky insult that Nashe had offered him in the dedication to "old Dick of Lichfield" in *Have With You to Saffron Walden* when he writes that Lichfield had "yet never metst with anie requital, except it were some few French crownes, pild Friers crownes, dry shaven" in reference to his labors as a Cambridge barber.[31] Barbers, like Lichfield, were considered medical men, and many barbers dabbled in the lucrative world of pox cures. The French crowns, which Nashe said were paid to Lichfield, are a pox symptom consisting of a ring of buboes around the top of the victim's head. The Friar's crown is a reference to pox-induced alopecia. Harvey's insult was even less specific in that it involves a more ideological poxing, but more on that later.[32] Peele's death as a result of the disease; Greene and Marlowe's debauchery and atheism; Greene's pocky confession in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, and the syphilitic infection and death of Nashe's patron, Sir George Carey, constitute a promising hint

[29] Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169.
[30] Nicholl, *Newes,* 9.
[31] Thomas Nashe, *Have with you to Saffron Walden,* in *The Works*, vol. 3, 6.
[32] For a discussion on pox insults directed toward Nashe, see Nicholl, 233-236.

as to why the Wits, in both life and literature, played such a pivotal role in the development of the pox metaphor.

One might say that the excesses which were derided by the reformist authors and the writers of corrective literature mark both the Wits' physical and literary corpus. Not only was disease and excess remembered, but the cruelty between flyting authors was recollected as well. Harvey's insensitivity was commonly noted by his colleagues:

> As Achilles tortured the deade bodie of Hector, and as Antonius, and his wife Fulvia tormented the livelesse corps of Cicero: so Gabriell Harvey hath shewed the same inhumanitie to Greene that lies full low in his grave.[33]

Nashe famously came to Greene's defense after reading Harvey's *Foure Letters and Certeine Sonnets.* In his attacks against Greene, Harvey used syphilis as a condemnation of Greene and as a connection between him and other corrupt authors. Harvey linked Greene (and Nashe) to both Gargantua and Rabelais to establish themes of "railing monstrosity, novelty, strategic ingenuity, verbal inflation, the pox, and a tendency to hang around taverns and print shops."[34] The image of Rabelais, like that of the Wits, had been conflated with their literary output. The conflation was apparently interchangeable: Harvey used Gargantua, "a man-mountain of verbiage," to represent Nashe as a literary monstrosity.[35] Harvey apparently felt that using Rabelais and Gargantua to conjure images of wild living, unchecked writing and the pox would have been an image that his readers would identify and applaud. He would expand the image to include Pietro Aretino as well: "the sweet Youth [Nashe] haunted *Aretino*, and *Rabelay* the two monstrous wittes of their languages, who so shaken with

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[33] Meres, Oo6^{r}.
[34] Anne Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), 202.
[35] Prescott, 200.

the furious feavers of the One: or so attainted with the French Pockes of the other?"[36] Harvey condescendingly implied that Nashe was an innocent youth led astray: his irresponsible reading had infected him with the furious fevers of satire and syphilis. Rabelais' writing tainted Nashe with the French pox merely through his reading.[37] For Harvey, the division between life and literature was, at the most, diaphanous. Harvey conflated Gargantua's corporeal effluence with Rabelais' verbal effluence, and he described both the writer and his writing as excessive, grotesque and diseased. Rabelais, Gargantua and Aretino were appropriated to describe not only Nashe or Greene's writings but also their personalities.[38] Finally, the pox can taint or disease a text just as the undesirable satire of Aretino has infected Nashe and the Wits.

In the poet wars, pockified personal attacks were routine, and disputes were easily transferred from ideologies and texts to individual character assassination. In early modern verbal and literary duels, excess, weakness and disabilities were fodder for exploitation in ways that might appear somewhat unpalatable today. Thus, in 1592, Gabriel Harvey harshly abused the memory of the deceased Robert Greene. Harvey gloated over the death of Greene and declared that his demise was the result of his excesses (via a surfeit of herring and Rhenish wine). This inappropriate jubilation was not enough: Harvey also condemned Greene's liberal sexuality in that he left his wife and maintained his mistress, a thief named Cutting Ball.[39] Harvey also surreptitiously accused both Greene and her of being pocky: "I would her Surgeon found her no worse, then lowsy."[40] Harvey's sarcastic hope that Greene's mistress was only lousy was an opportunity for the Cambridge don to hint that she

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[36] Gabriel Harvey, *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (London, 1593), B1^{v}.
[37] For Harvey's contradictory public and private views about Rabelais, see Prescott, 202.
[38] Nashe, himself, "claimed kinship to Pietro Aretino." Nicholl, *Newes*, 4. See also Prescott's discussion on Elizabethan public and private construction of Aretino and Rabelais. Prescott, 196-202.
[39] Gabriel Harvey, *Foure Letters and Certeine Sonnets, Especially Touching Robert Greene and Other Parties by him Abused* (London, 1592), B2^{v}.
[40] Harvey, *Foure Letters* B3^{r}.

had a sexually transmitted disease—one that Greene had presumably shared with her. Harvey's delicacy in the matter was rather sanctimonious, and it shows an incongruous restraint from an author who was writing a book to defame a dead man.

After Greene's death, Thomas Nashe assumed the war of words against the Harveys with a righteous indignation. Again, Meres recorded the lives of the poets, and in this instance, Nashe's role in the dispute: "as Eupolis of Athens used great libertie in taxing the vices of men: so dooth Thomas Nash, witnesse the broode of the Harveys."[41] Meres, who sympathized with Greene and Nashe, viewed the Harveys' as a brood of vipers, and again, he placed Nashe's actions within a classical framework—a framework of convention. Meres compared Nashe to Eupolis, the Greek comic poet famed for his satirical and malicious works. The actions and conventions of ancient authors as well as those of the more immediate past have informed him and his contemporaries. Convention in the Renaissance was particularly important and nowhere more so than the proto-journalistic writings of the 1590s. This may very well have been because the authors were in new territory with a new style of writing, genre and market—in fact the idea of professional writing itself was quite novel. Even the Wits' medium, the pamphlet, was being redefined:

> Though already venerable the word "pamphlet" prospered in the 1580s, as its meanings shifted and it entered into common use. In 1716, Myles Davies claimed it as "a true-born *English* Denison," a native idiom, "of no longer a Date than that of the last Century, since tis almost certain its Pedigree can scarce be trac'd higher than the latter end of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign.[42]

The insistence upon convention in the genre may have been of great importance in establishing the journalistic tradition. Syphilis became integrated into the fabric of convention as a stock image for excessive consumption and/or corruption, which was

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[41] Meres, Oo6[r].
[42] Raymond, 7.

a chief concern for early modern writers and readers. Paradoxically, the Wits' framework of convention was also a source of innovation. As E. M. W. Tillyard argued, "the greatest things in literature are the most commonplace."[43] Tillyard held that "Raleigh's remarks on the glories of creation and on death, [or] Shakespeare's on the state of man in the world seem to be utterly their own;" the same can also be said of the Wits' less grandiose, but equally innovative use of poxy conventions: "divested of their literary form they are the common property of every third-rate mind of the age."[44] The Wits used convention and conventional subjects derived from classical medieval and recent European literature, such as pox-as-sin; pox-as-punishment; poxy *femme fatales*—to enhance their work, but they used these images in way that was fundamentally innovative: by incorporating these well-established conventions into a new genre and from a new point of view: that of the professional author writing about the news-oriented concerns of his day.

All of the Wits' poxy conventions are bound together by a common thread: syphilis—as a metaphor in the second half of the sixteenth century exists as an image of corruption, related to excess. The pox re-entered literature through the thriving genre of religious invective, and while this style of writing was not inherently poxy, the genre's emphasis on corruption invited associations with the disease. Religious controversy had continued unabated between 1560 and 1590, and while the pox was not as important an image as it was in the religious writings of the early sixteenth century, similar images of decay and corruption were present. The rise of commercial, popular writers helped to reinforce the return of the pox metaphor. Through incidents such as the Marprelate controversy, popular writers realized that

[43] E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; London: Penguin, 1990), 116.
[44] Tillyard, 116.

religious invective sold for its railing as much as its message; as a result, they set out to market their own:

> The encounter between Marprelate and his antagonists recognized the potential of cheap print as a vehicle for controversy. From the 1580s pamphlets were a regular feature of booksellers' stalls, and an increasingly important element in the economy of the book trade.[45]

Popular writers would also study classical literature to strengthen their images and arguments. The conjunction of religious and moral invective with classical literary precedents would come to define the poxy style that the Wits employed with such success. As a result, convention, invective and the pox become intertwined in the literature of the 1590s to make potent and vivid metaphors of corruption, consumption, decay, and moral outrage.

Roberto's Poxy Confession

Robert Greene, who created extended and complex pockified conceits, offered a rather traditionally moralistic view of pox as a punishment for sins in his posthumously published and allegedly autobiographical *Greene's Groats-Worth of Witte, Bought with a Million of Repentance*. Printed in the same year as Harvey's *Four Letters, Groats-Worth* may have provided Harvey with a precedent for attacking Greene's illicit sexuality. In *Groats-Worth*, the narrator, Roberto, is seduced into the underworld of the theaters by a well-appareled individual whom he mistakes for a gentleman—he is actually a wealthy actor. Roberto follows the scent of lucre and, as Stephen Gosson would have predicted, rather conventionally descends from the theater into mortal peril. Greene wrote of his persona, Roberto: "his immeasurable drinking had made him the perfect image of dropsie, and the loathsome scourge of

[45] Raymond, 12.

Lust tyrannized his bones."[46] Roberto's alcoholic excess has resulted in drink-induced illness. His intemperance reveals a loss of control that complements the image of his unchecked appetite.

Roberto's vices are interrelated. For example, John Lane personified the vices of gluttony and lechery to explain how one leads to the other: "lazie gluttonie/ Comforts her selfe with Ladie Lecherie."[47] Greene's allusion to this third excess of lechery initially appears to be more cryptic, but one can clearly read pox symptoms in Roberto's "tyrannized" bones. It was well known that syphilis attacked bones and joints. Furthermore, the phrase reveals a commonly held medical belief: lust itself, rather than the yet-to-be-formulated idea of the specific pathogen, could cause ailments. Since lust was a sin, Greene reinforced the message that the pox was a divine punishment. Greene's persona reflects this belief when he is confronted by a parade of his own sins:

> All my wrongs muster themselves before mee, every evill at once plagues mee. For my contempt of God, I am contemned of men: for my swearing and forswearing, no man will beleeve me: for my gluttony, I suffer hunger: for my drunkenness, thirst: for my adultery, ulcerous sores. Thus God hath cast me downe, that I might be humbled: and punished me for example of other sinners.[48]

Roberto's list of his sins seems almost formulaic, and in fact, his self-condemnation directly echoes the sermons of poxy radical Protestant preachers. What makes Roberto's confession unique is the ambiguity of the author's intent and his application of sin personified presented in a protojournalistic endeavor. One can only conjecture as to what the author's intentions may have been since Greene, like Nashe,

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[46] Robert Greene, *Greene's Groats-Worth of Witte, Bought with a Million of Repentance* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, ltd., 1923), 38.
[47] John Lane, "*Tom Tel-Troths Message*," The New Shakespeare Society, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1876), 131.
[48] Greene, *Groats-Worth*, 38.

consciously manipulated his various literary personas as well as his readers' perception of his own character. Which is Roberto and which Robert Greene; and is this truly a confession, or is it a journalistic retrospective, looking back on a life of sin in the hope of future literary or financial return?

At the time of the writing, Greene was famously dying as a result of intemperance and gluttony—the feast of Rhenish wine and pickled herrings that Nashe and Meres recorded. Two of Roberto's first sins are gluttony and intemperance. In his punishment for gluttony, Roberto's hunger and thirst recall the classical image of Tantalus in Hades denied food and drink while surrounded by plenty (see Fig. 5). Like the fruit and water that receded from Tantalus' grasp, the wealth and plenty of early modern London eluded Roberto. Roberto also mentions the price of another excess—his lust. If the promise of money seduced Roberto into prostituting his muse to the stage, the women of this world have seduced and poxed him; as a result, his talent, character and health are degraded by literary prostitution and female prostitutes. The punishment for his lust, in the form of his "ulcerous sores," reinforced his earlier reference to sexually transmitted disease.

The Poxy Femme Fatale

Greene's mention of sexual corruption and disease in *Groats-Worth* was only the final chapter in his association with the pox and its effects. Only a year before *Groats-Worth*, Greene had been warning his male readers against the wiles of cozening prostitutes in *A Noteable Discovery of Coosenage.* He cautioned his readers: "some fond men are so farre in with these detestable trugs, that they consume what they have upon them and find nothing but a Neapolitan favor for their labor."[49]

[49] Robert Greene, *A Noteable Discovery of Coosenage* (London, 1591), C4^{r}.

The trug's "favor" is a clear reference to syphilis; the Neapolitan tag is an allusion to the location of Europe's first recorded outbreak of the pox. Using this image, Greene conjured a parade of prostitutes that work their way into gulls' hearts, milk them of all their money and infect them with the pox.

Greene's works are frequently and emphatically punctuated by misogynistic images of women portrayed as *femmes fatales* who appear to be infectious agents personified. Unlike gluttony, which authors blamed on the individual, lust for male Elizabethan writers was a more parasitic vice: the threat revolved around the machinations of women.[50] In other words, one gave oneself gout from eating too much rich food, but a woman infected a man with the pox. According to Greene and his like-minded contemporaries, these rampant and parasitic women ensnared males with desire and lured them to ruin.

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[50] While Greene's *femmes fatales* were common, the opinion that women were exclusively at fault was not universal. In *Willobie his Avisa* (1594) the poet follows in the footsteps of Erasmus in presenting an image in which innocent women must defend themselves from pocky men. Avisa uses the pox to defend her chastity. She warns her second suitor of his uncontrolled lust:

> You must againe to Coleman hedge,
> For there be some that looke for gaine,
> They will bestow the French mans badge,
> In lew of all your cost and paine,
> But Sir, it is against my use,
> For gaine to make my house a stewes.
> ($E4^r$)

Avisa suggests that if her pursuer must have his pleasure, rather than futilely pursuing her, he should repair to Coleman hedge (an area where he can find brothels). There, for his money and effort, he can gain the Frenchman's badge—or syphilis. The warning to the suitor, that if he returns to the stews, he will catch syphilis is coupled with an announcement that she will not prostitute herself. She also reveals that his pocky appearance further extinguishes any inclination to sin that she may have had:

> And if your face might be your judge,
> Your wannie cheekes, your shaggie lockes,
> Would rather move my mind to grudge,
> To feare the piles, or else the pockes:
> Yf you be mov'd, to make amends,
> Pray keepe your knackes for other frends.
> ($E4^v$)

Avisa adds that she would not be moved to love or desire the suitor because of his wild and diseased appearance. The suitor's wan cheeks and shaggy locks, for Avisa, imply a pox infection. Like "The Unequal Match" or *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside,* the reader is presented with a quite rare situation in Elizabethan literature: the male is the pox carrier threatening to infect the innocent female, rather than the *femme fatale* who is poxing innocent males. Hadrian Dorrell, *Willobie, His Avisa* (London, 1594), EEBO, internet, 29 August 2004.

In the *femme fatale* paradigm all women are dangerous, and all female social states (unmarried, married or widowed) are inadequate for controlling feminine desire: "while they are maidens, they wish wantonly: while they are wives they will willfully, while they are widowes, they woulde willinglie: and yet all these proude desires, are but close dissemblings."[51] The statement betrays a fear of the autonomous, sexually liberated woman.[52] The traditional image of the maiden guarded by her parents is supplanted by the image of a young woman confined but not controlled—she wishes wantonly. The wife bound by wedlock is freer than the maiden; her husband has no control over her, and she wills willfully. The wife is no longer a child—age has given her some responsibility and freedom—nor is she a virgin so there is no proof of chastity, a most unsettling development for the early modern male psyche and its peculiar, omnipresent concern with cuckoldry. Finally, the widow, emancipated from both parents and husband, would willingly pursue her pleasure despite family and financial obligation.

In all of these examples, female sexual desire threatens to enslave women and conquer men:

> the female body *was* held to be monstrous and grotesque, a region of erotic desire governed by the quasi-autonomous uterus, which lurked like Acrasia in her bower, ready to transform heroic masculine rigor into luxurious sensual excess... Classical myth and narrative, so popular in the period, were replete with stories of male figures conquered by an ungovernable female principle.[53]

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[51] Robert Greene, *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (London, 1592), B1^{r}-B1^{v}.

[52] These fears focused on the freedom of the city-dame, and they remain popular well into the Jacobean period. Moulton suggests that in both Jonson's *Epicoene* (1609) and Massinger and Fletcher's *The Custom of the Country* (1619), "the City women's social and sexual mobility is emblematized by their means of transport—they own coaches, a new and much criticized addition to London street traffic." Moulton, *Before Pornography,* 74, 76.

[53] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London: Routledge, 1995), 221.

Greene may have been hinting that the widow had lost her charms since she "would" rather than does, but even age has not quieted her desires. The idea of the elderly lady, "clearly past childbearing, presents female sexual desire as a pursuit of physical pleasure, not limited to the biological need to bear children."[54] The old woman enslaved by her own womb was meant to strip male readers of any romantic conceptions of female sexuality that the desiring and desirable, young maid or wife may have promised. This viewpoint is supported in Robert Burton's Jacobean example in which:

> an old widowe, as mother so long since (and in Plinies opinion) she doth very unseemely seeke to marry, yet whilst she is old as a crone, a bedlame, she can neither see, nor heare, nor stand, a meere carcasse, a witch, and can scarce feele; yet shee cauterwaules, and must have a stallion, a Champion, she must and wil marry againe, and betroth herselfe to some yong man, that hates to looke on, but for her goods, abhorres the sight of her, to the prejudice of her good name, her own undoing, grief of her friends, and ruine of her children.[55]

Like a caterwauling cat in heat, Burton's widow is also controlled by a destructive desire. Burton argued that the widow's unnatural and unseemly sexual appetite would cause the financial ruin of her family. In any case, both Greene and Burton's widows were representations of women who were threatening to the patriarchy because they deceived and subverted masculine control in order to realize their appetites.

In an attempt to malign these examples of feminine autonomy, Greene argued that women who pursued their desires seem to be exerting free will, but in reality this was deception: their "proude desires are merely close dissembling." For Greene, vain women were both trapped by their desires and entrapped men through their desire: in either case, the woman was the guilty party. In line with this argument, Greene firmly placed the pox-blame on women. Women, who rejected patriarchal dominance to

[54] Moulton, 76.
[55] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1624), AAA3v.

follow their will, initiated a descent into corruption, disease and death. Greene was pockifying the ancient argument that such women (and by implication all women) were fundamentally dangerous. To illustrate this point, he and the other Wits employ the conventional images of women as bees, scorpions, serpents, sirens or Lamia.[56] In particular, Greene and his contemporaries seemed to have been heavily influenced by Proverbs:

> My son attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. (*The King James Version*, Proverbs, 5.1-5).

Greene paraphrased this same passage when he warned his readers of female wiles:

> A shameles woman hath hony in her lippes, and her throte as sweet as hony, her throte as soft as oyle: but the end of her is more bitter than Aloes, and her tongue is more sharp then a two edged sword, her feet go unto death, and her steppes leade unto hell.[57]

Women seduce through sweet words and an attractive appearance—the honey, as Greene called it. The end of a woman however is bitter—implying that her sexuality is dangerous. Her sweet lips disguise a sharp tongue, and her power of seduction leads to damnation (see Fig. 6). By the time that Greene was creating his shameless women the image had become an early modern convention.

Greene's representation of these women with bitter tails was borrowed from a tradition of pockifying Proverbs that English writers began early in the sixteenth century. In 1525, John Ryckes warned that women, represented by a character called Carnal Love, will bring ruin to men:

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[56] Anonymous, "Tarltons Newes Out of Purgatorie," (London, 1590), EEBO, internet, 10 August, 2004.
[57] Greene, *Noteable Discovery* C3^{v}.

> Through the beaute of this ymage many a thousande have perysshed and than I consydered y^{e} he sayd treuth in all degres remembrynge stronge Sampson holy Davyd wise Salomon and many others how they were disceyved... Therfore sayth he in his proverbes beholde not this disceyvable ymage for peraventure thou lokest not well aboute yf thou beholdest onely the outwarde countenaunce thou arte dysceyved. Eauusem distilans labia meritricis and c. For this harlottes lyppes be as swete as a hony combe and the throte of her shyninge more clerer than oyle but ye last ende of it is very bytter and styngeth more venymously than the tayle of a serpente he shewed me also that I perceyved not I was so blyndyd with lokynge upon the ymage onely and a lytell frome her was there deth and hell mouth gapynge to receyve her and all that were with her.[58]

For Ryckes, Carnal Love is a female who promises death and destruction in a format linguistically similar to Solomon's Proverbs persona. Ryckes, however, has also seized upon the further association of Carnal Love as the Whore of Babylon—a character that has proven the ruin of many of God's chosen and continues to do so in the world of early sixteenth-century London. The notable reformer, Heinrich Bullinger, had also associated pox with the harlot of Proverbs in the first half of the century:

> In the fyfth of the Proverbes of Salomon saye after this maner: The lyppes of an harlot are as swete droppynge hony combe, and her throte is softer then oyle: but her end is bitterer then death, and as sharpe as a two edged swearde. Her feete lead unto deathe, and her pathe drawethe unto hell. Therfore se that thou go not in unto her, nether draw nygh to the dores of her house, lest straungers have thy substaunce, and lest the cruell gette thyne encreace. Wythe fewe wordes doth Salomon describe the shorte and swete disceatfulnesse of whoredome, which yet leaveth be hynd it a perpetuall vytternes, and brefely be she weth, howe that whoredome destroyeth in soule, in honoure, in body and in good. As for ensamples, we nede not to sette forthe any there are to many before oure eyes, the more pitie. The stories do testify, that the Frenche pockes came of an harlot into the worlde thorowe whoredome. Howe

[58] John Ryckes, *The Ymage of Love* (London, 1525), B2^{r}- B2^{v}, EEBO, internet, 17 June 2004.

> many a man hath consumed all his substaunce and goodes wyth harlottes, and at the last hath ben hanged, drowned or headed?[59]

Bullinger's pockified harlot appears to be less of an all-encompassing Whore of Babylon, and more specifically, a threat to the readers' health and goods.[60] He summoned the French pox as disease which men can catch from women and but also as an indicator of the greater moral and economic perils of whoremongering. Bullinger implied that not only was there a risk of sickness, but a man who spent all his money on prostitutes would become desperate and end: "hanged, drowned or headed."

In 1591, the anonymous author of *Tarltons News Out of Purgatory* presented a riddle which seems likely to have provided the immediate inspiration for Greene's misogynistic images in *Noteable Discovery*:

> What creatures those be, that in sight are Carnations, in smell Roses, in hearing Syrens, in touching nettles, and in tast wormewood? Thus I answere: they be (my masters quoth he) these kinde of cattle that we covet so much to keepe, and these be women: for he that sees a gallant wench, which wee Italians terme Bona Roba, with a faire face flourisht over with a vermilion blush, shee seemes to his eie as beautifull as a Carnation: and hir breath that is as sweete and odoriferous as a Rose: he that listens to hir words, shall finde them as pleasant and melodious as the Syren, and as full of flattery as Cyrces: so that hee that will avoide there wiles, must with Ulisses tie himselfe to the mast, or els venture on there dangerous shelves: in touching they be nettles, for they sting to the quicke: and in tast whosoever tries

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[59] Heinrich Bullinger, *The Golden Boke of Christen Matrimonye,* trans. Miles Coverdale (London, 1543), F4[r], EEBO, internet, 13 July, 2004.

[60] These two early sixteenth-century examples foreshadow the Wits' and the prose satirists' themes. The Wits associated the pox more as a devourer of health and commodities, like the Bullinger-Coverdale model while the verse satirists, which I shall discuss in the next chapter, tend to create more Ryckes-like monumental and destructive, Whore of Babylon images. Greene dwells on the commodity-devouring abilities of pockified harlot-women. Borrowing *femme fatale* imagery from Proverbs is probably far more ancient that this; however, the oldest reference I am aware of is Dunbar's late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century widow's instruction to the two married women: "be dragonis baitht and dowis, ay in double forme… And with a terrebill tail be stangand as edderis." William Dunbar, "The Tua Mariit Women and the Wedo," *The Complete Poems,* vol. 1, ed. John Small (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 38.

> them, shall finde them as bitter in the ende as wormewood.[61]

The connection is probable since Greene also conflated from his Proverbs-inspired tirade against the evil of women in *Groats-Worth* with the analogous, classical image of evil women as Syrens: "as populous Citties have deceiving Syrens, whose eies are Adamants, whose words are witchcraftes, whose doores lead downe to death."[62] These Siren-like women actively seek to destroy those who are foolishly enslaved by their desires; they are:

> Nice wantons, faire women that like to Lamiæ, had faces like Angels, eies like stars, brests like the golden font in the Hesperides, but from the middle downwardes theyr shapes like serpents. These with Syrenlike allurement so entised these quaint squires, that they bestowed al their flowers upon them for favours, they themselves walking home by beggars bush for a pennance.[63]

Lamia was a figure from Greek mythology that had a woman's head and torso with a serpent's lower extremities. Greene went to some length to describe the angelic beauty of women but then reversed the image when he describes their lower, hidden parts. Above, they were all beauty, but below, they were serpentine—an image that implied sin, deceit, pox and corruption.

If Greene argued that female desire was a source of evil (and the pox), he was now separating males from any responsibility by constructing an argument that denied male sexuality. Greene suggested that men loved the ethereal female—hair, eyes and breasts—only to find the serpentine half of women hidden below. Beauty was the means by which women entrapped men. The soft, starry eyes of the seemingly beautiful woman in *Quip* are transformed into the adamantine eyes of the lady in *Groats-worth.* Both women have beautiful eyes; however, the softness of starlight

[61] Anonymous, *Purgatorie,* C1^{r}-C1^{v}.
[62] Greene, *Groats-Worth,* 14.
[63] Greene, *Quip,* B2^{v}.

gives way to the hardness of adamant just as the beautiful upper body of the lady distracts the innocent male from the serpentine element below. A summary of Greene's views on women would then be that they entrap men with beauty, break them financially, pox them, and abandon them.

Gordon Williams discussed early modern images of hellish female sexual organs that derived metaphorical "force from the intersection of hell-fire and the burning of the pox" in the writings of Nashe, Shakespeare and Marston.[64] Williams' reading is supported by Greene's morbidly salacious reading of Proverbs 5.1-5 as an even earlier reading of women's "steppes... unto hell" referring to infectious, sexualized women and a death via syphilitic infection. His theory can bolstered with a reading of *Tom Tel-Troths Message*. Lane's persona, Tom, complains that:

> Thousands of whores maintained by their wooers,
> Entice by land as *Syrens* doe by seas,
> Which being like path-waies or open doores,
> Infect mens bodies with the French disease:
> Thus women woe of men though wooed by men,
> Still adde new matter to my plaintife pen.[65]

Tom's tirade very much echoes and consolidates Greene's several images of the female as a scorpion, bee, or siren. Furthermore, in this incident, the siren imagery revolves around a pun/paradox: men woo to their woe. Women are the bane of men, but one that they blindly pursue. Women supported unlawfully by men (unmarried women in sexual relationships) were considered whores, who deprived their male hosts of both money and health. The money that the men spent on supporting such women was repaid in transitory pleasure and permanently in the form of the French disease.

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[64] Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare, Sex, and the Print Revolution* (London: Athlone, 1996), 52.
[65] Lane, 133.

> Originality was not considered a virtue in the composition of moral satire and treatments of the topics had always been extremely derivative.[66]

Greene's Proverbs-inspired women along with his Lamia, scorpion and bee images became part of a convention which inscribed fear of both poxy pathogens and social decay (in this case, exemplified by female independence). Greene, Nashe and the Harveys' feud was essentially a convention—a literary argument in which the participants were very much aware that they were participating in a writers' duel based on historical precedents.[67] The Wits also capitalized on other conventions—most of which were perceived threats to society such as the theater and other ill-regarded social practices, or people, including free women, vagabonds and foreigners.[68] In a larger sense, Greene's chauvinist tirades were part of this commentary on contemporary society. In the synthesis between convention and contemporary social commentary, Greene struck upon something truly innovative: the burgeoning connection between consumption and corruption and the role of the pox as the primary image of this conflation. In yet another pamphlet, Greene issued a warning: "Gentleman these Conny-catchers, these vultures, these fatall Harpies, that

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[66] Hutson, *Context,* 180.

[67] Writers' literary feuds, often called flytings, came down from late medieval mock-disputations (*quaestiones munis principales* or *quaestiones quod libeticae*) in which:

> Bachelors were allowed to pose facetious questions to the Masters. These humorous disputations which mocked academic procedure, scholarly methods, authors, fashions, and vices were the model and prototype for [...] satire.

Paul Reinhard Becker, *A War of Fools: The Letters of Obscure Men, A Study of Satire and the Satirized* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang: 1981).

[68] Coney-catching texts often emblazon the theaters as vice-ridden areas. In these attacks, the authors borrowed from radical Protestant texts; however, the Wits and most other writers of underworld literature were often playwrights and would seemingly have supported theater. The paradox, I believe, is illusory: the truth was that theaters were probably high-risk areas (as was, by many accounts, St. Paul's), and this fact is separate from a discussion of the justification of theater itself.

putrifie with their infections, this flourishing estate of England."[69] According to Greene then, not only shameless women but swindlers and others on the fringes of society were a disease that was attacking England, and in the case of loose women, that disease was not only figurative but a concrete poxy infection as well. In the passage, published in 1591, Greene began a process of conflating the idea of consumption and corruption by introducing an image of infection to illustrate the idea of moral corruption—a process which the pox played a central role. Admittedly, this passage only reveals the first step of the process, but as Greene and Nashe developed the idea, the pox became something that was imported from foreign lands, prospered in tainted environments and among people of dubious backgrounds, occupations, and sexual mores.

Xenophobia

To early modern English authors, foreigners arguably constitute the most dangerous of populations. As a matter of national character, Hilliard reported that "national pride found expression in xenophobia; foreign entanglements were suspect, and resident foreigners were harassed."[70] Much of the xenophobia was the result of economic concerns, and the tension between government policy and ingrained prejudice:

> Expressions of anti-alien sentiment ran the gamut from propaganda to organized complaints by citizens, to harassment and assault in the streets and at the workplace. The central government, however, persisted in the policy of supporting and protecting the strangers, even in the face of considerable native animosity and the Crown's quiet reservations about the aliens' trustworthiness.[71]

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[69] Robert Greene, *The Second Part of Conny-Catching* (London, 1591), 6.
[70] Hilliard (1986), 150.
[71] Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us* (London: Routledge, 1996), 98.

England's ingrained xenophobia was enflamed by fear and jealousy directed toward the continental artisans that the Elizabethan government actively recruited. Authors often denounced the specialty goods that foreigners either created or imported into England.

Laura Hunt Yungblut traced the literary history of the nation's complaint against foreigners as far back as 1436: foreigners were charged with draining the commonwealth of bullion, forming price-rigging rings and spying; furthermore, early authors go so far as to suggest "that the alien merchants were destroying the fabric of English society."[72] Foreigners were also blamed with selling vain, fashionable goods that were frail and unsubstantial; all of these reasons contributed to the stirring of xenophobic sentiment, and by the mid sixteenth century, "rightly or wrongly, foreigners were usually the first to be blamed for misfortune."[73]

The fear of refined consumption naturally segued into commentary both on corruption and the pox. Furthermore, throughout the early modern period, syphilis was a disease of otherness. From its first appearance it was linked to foreignness: in both naming the disease and creating origin myths about the pox—from the French, Spanish, Dutch, Indian and Italian pox to Jewish, Amerindian and Neapolitan sources of the disease—early modern authors strongly favored foreign sources . The concept had much to do with the perception of the pox as a new disease. While some authors, such as Girolamo Fracastoro and Joseph Grünpeck, had believed that syphilis arose from an astrological conjunction, many others thought the source to be the result of blasphemous activities. Several authors suspected that the disease sprang forth from various unnatural sexual pairings. Again, these tropes of diseased intercourse often

[72] Yungblut, 98.
[73] Yungblut, 98, 100.

involved that traditional signifier of God's displeasure, leprosy, as well as foreigners, Jews and diseased prostitutes.[74]

Disease and vice were thought to be imported by foreigners—including the Italians, Spanish, Dutch and especially, the French. During the 1590s, the conflation of the pox with concerns about excessive consumption and societal corruption resulted in passages in which goods, ideas and texts as well as actual disease became infections that threatened to infect the commonwealth. Syphilis and xenophobia already had a long tradition in English literature. In the 1592 publication of *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, Greene revealed a certain familiarity with many of the xenophobic stereotypes and conventions. Greene initially identifies foreigners as dangerous:

> The one a Dutchman and a shoomaker, the other a Frenchman and a Myllaner in saint Martins, and sels shirts, bandes, bracelets, Jewels, and such pretty toies for Gentlewomen: oh they be of velvet breeches acquaintance, upstarts as well as he, that have brought with them pride and abuses into England.[75]

Greene's Dutch and French immigrants bring excessively luxurious goods into England and transform English women into ravenous consumers and English men into effeminate fops. The issue here was the transference of blame. Outsiders brought danger into the country: *they* imported pride and abuses. In other words, the country was destabilized by decadence from external sources that stood in direct contradiction to traditional English virtue and simplicity. This infection was both metaphorical and physical. The milliner and his wife were harmful to England:

> What toies deviseth he to feed the humor of the upstart Gentleman withall, and of fond Gentlewomen? such fannes, such ouches, such brooches, such bracelets, such graundcies, such periwigs, such paintings, such ruffes and cufs, as hath almost made England as full of

[74] Harris, *Foreign Bodies*, 27.
[75] Greene, *Quip*, G4^{v}.

> proud fopperies as Tyre and Sydon were. There is no Seamster can make a bande or a shirt, so well as his wife: and why forsooth? bicause the filthy queane wears a craunce and is a Frenchwoman forsooth.[76]

Greene substantiated the fear of cultural corruption with a double entendre in which the portrayal of foreign-made headgear was mirrored by syphilitic symptoms. Furthermore, Greene appears to have been writing with knowledge of "the strange verbal association... between syphilitic infection and ostentatious elegance" which first appeared in Rabelais' day.[77] This belief sprang from an association between wealth, privilege and the pox that was as old as European conceptions of the disease itself.[78] It was not much of a progression to go from pox as fashion to pockifying fashion, and through Greene's image, the milliner's wife became both the creator of pockified foreign fashion in London and a genuine syphilitic. This is apparent in Greene's description: she is a queen, or prostitute, who wears a craunce. The craunce—a crown or chaplet—in conjunction with the reminder that she is a Frenchwoman is meant to imply a "French crown," or the characteristic ring of syphilitic buboes that often surrounded a victim's head.

The Frenchwoman's pox is complemented by her husband, the milliner, who infects English men and women with idleness and vanity by tempting them with a myriad of accouterments. The basic premise is that fashion is vanity and vanity is sin. "Excess in apparel" was thought to be a "symbol of the national moral collapse,

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[76] Greene, *Quip,* G4^{v}.

[77] Carol Clark, *The Vulgar Rabelais* (Glasgow: Pressgang, 1983), 117.

[78] This connection is substantiated by Werner Kümmel's discussion on the early modern signifier for the syphilis as "the court disease:"

> The term "court disease" was coined in Spain, towards the end of the fifteenth century, as one of the numerous names for the apparently new disease, syphilis. The Valencian physician, Gaspar Torrella (1452- 1520), doctor at the courts of Pope Alexander VI and Cesare Borgia, noted in 1497 in his book on syphilis that, in southern Spain, the disease was known as "*morbus curialis*" because it was
> always to be found in the vicinity of a court.

Werner Friedrich Kümmel, "*De Morbis Aulicis,*" *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500-1837,* ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Routledge, 1990), 19.

leading 'to the disorder and confusion of the degrees of all estates... and finally to [the] subversion of all good order.'"[79] A preoccupation with fashion undermined native English manliness. Fashion was emasculating: the ruffs and cuffs were foppery, but whilst fashion could emasculate English men, it was more often considered the vice of women where it bred deception. Satirists railed against "painted" women describing them as hypocritical whores, "painted tombs" or "sepulchers."[80] Their sin was merely that they were "painted." The fact that they chose to wear makeup made them suspect because the process of applying cosmetics was regarded as an act of deception. Renaissance authors' condemnation of painted

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[79] F. J. Levy, "Staging the News" in *Print, Manuscript and Performance,* ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Micahel D. Bristol (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 257.

[80] By the time the Wits appeared, the representation of painted, poxed women was part of a venerable tradition. Jacobus Wittewronghelus explained one of the Biblical-apocryphal roots of the corrupting, painted harlot: "Every mans own flesh is as a Harlot (as Judas termeth it in his Epistle,) yea and a peinted harlot, which with her inticements and fayrefawnings, doth allure, delight, and egge the man to sinne, and hold him down." Jacobus Wittewronghelus, *Concerning the True Beleefe of a Christian Man,* trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1582), E3^{v}, EEBO, internet, 31 October 2004. Wittwronghelus illustrated this image in a dialogue translated from Latin in the 1580s by Arthur Golding:

> *Fred.*
> What if some friende of yours were in love with a flattering and a peinted harlot, whiche were diseased with the Frenche pockes, and you knew of it: what would you do?
> *Lew.*
> I would make him privie to her disease, and (to the uttermost that I could) I would disswade him from her companie.
> *Fred.*
> What if he sayde he were delighted with her?
> *Lew.*
> I would tell him that Fishes also are delited with baytes: but yet that it were folly to purchase so small pleasure with so great sorrowes, or rather with death.

Wittewronghelus, E3^{r}. Greene offers the image of women as painted tombs as early as 1590: "I bought his axiomes with deepe repentance: now do I find their faces are painted sepulchers whereas their mindes are tombes full of rotten bones and serpents." Robert Greene, *Greene's Mourning Garment* (London, 1590), F4^{r}, EEBO, internet, 10 August 2004.

The image would continue to gain popularity in the 1590s and it appeared several times in late Elizabethan and Jacobean literature in discussions of hypocrisy and decay such as in Robert Roche's image which suggests that paint on the outside conceals a rotten interior:

> Franke not rebellious flesh, but keepe it downe.
> Like not those painted dames that doe delight,
> Lyllies are fowle in smell, though faire in sight.
> And though they tice with baites, with teeres, with moanes,
> Yet minde, that painted tombes, have rotten bones.

Robert Roche, *Eustathia, or the Constancie of Susanna* (Oxford, 1599), I2^{v}, EEBO, internet, 31 October 2004. By 1618, painted tombs were a widely understood word picture for hypocrisy, which required a minimum of words such as: "Flat *Hypocrisie:* a painted Whore." Henry FitzGeffrey, *Certain Elegies* (London, 1618), C2^{v}, EEBO, internet, 17 June 2004. Several verse satirists dwell upon images of painted, deceiving women, which I will address in the next chapter.

ladies may seem to be a rather draconian censure against deceit. Women who paint and perfume mislead, and their sin is vanity and/or hypocrisy. There is also a medico-syphilitic fear behind the painted and perfumed: early modern authors recorded a fear of poxed women that disguised their syphilitic symptoms of stinking breath and rotting flesh with exotic scents while cosmetics and other accessories (such as masks and velvet patches) disguise ulcerous sores and decayed body parts.[81]

The conflation of corruption and consumption did not only belong to the paradigm of an England in which foreigners imported vice into English bodies and the body politic; early modern Englishmen could also leave their homeland and be infected through interaction with foreigners abroad. According to Hilliard, the fear resulted in censure in which:

> Returned travelers were ridiculed because of their affected foreign manners and dress [...] more serious was the fear that travelers would become atheists, papists, or both at once. The physical dangers of travel—shipwreck, disease, or treachery—were less significant than the dangers to the soul.[82]

Hilliard's argument is astute, but I would suggest a broader reading: early modern authors would have ridiculed several threats to the soul, such as foreign ideas, fashion and dissolute lifestyles, all of which might culminate in atheism and Catholicism. In this context, the general idea remains essentially the same: infection and corruption, whether of an intellectual, aesthetic, moral, or physical nature, all threaten the soul and are all exemplified by pox metaphors.

Nashe's narrator in *The Unfortunate Traveler*, Jack Wilton, offers a similar idea: if foreigners bring vice and disease into the country, an English traveler will find

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[81] Greene's pockified writing may very well have influenced Shakespeare when he was writing *2 Henry IV* a few years later. Greene stated that the milliner was a purveyor of "such fannes, such ouches, such brooches, such bracelets, such graundcies." The ouches and brooches ostensibly refer to jewelry. However, ouch and brooch signified different types of skin eruptions. Falstaff uses the same reading of broaches, pearls, and ouches in *2 Henry IV*. In Chapter 6, see 246.

[82] Hilliard, 151.

the outside world perilous for the same reasons. In Elizabethan England many supported travel as an educational experience, but the majority of the population nurtured a great fear and distrust of foreigners. Common conventional wisdom dictated that in any foray abroad, an English traveler will run a gauntlet of stereotyped threats from foreign neighbors: the drunken Dutchman, the Machiavellian Italian, prideful and the hot-headed Spaniard, and the syphilitic Frenchman. Xenophobic sentiment was enflamed by domestic and economic woes that included the real and perceived struggle between native and foreign craftsman in London that was periodically wont to spill over into riots and violence.[83] In the mid-1590s, social issues such as the plague epidemic, crop failures, inflation and economic fears, exacerbated by popular xenophobia against alien artisans and the problem of vagrancy, were polarized "by the threatened conjunction between apprentices and discontented soldiers and by disillusionment with the government of the City," which resulted in what Ian W. Archer called "the worst decade sixteenth-century Londoners experienced."[84]

Nashe combined Elizabethan xenophobic sentiment with Elizabethan travel writing in Wilton's complaint about the hardships of travel:

> The traveler must have the backe of an asse to beare all, a tung like the taile of a dog to flatter all, the mouth of a hogge to eat what is set before him, the eare of a

[83] It is important to note that as early as the seventeenth century, early modern writers were aware of the negative influences of a poor economy on the body politic, which could result in violence and riots. By the 1620s, Sir Edward Coke was

> Convinced that the current economic crisis was intimately related to problems in the wool and cloth trades. Like many writers of the early seventeenth century, he believed that trade, like money, was "the lifeblood of the state," and that because nine-tenths of England's exports consisted of cloth, this particular trade was "the axis of the commonwealth." He realized that declines in the cloth trade led to widespread unemployment and social disorder.

Stephen D. White, *Sir Edward Coke and the Grievances of the Commonwealth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 101.

[84] Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2, 11. For a discussion of the difficulties that beset London in the 1590s, see Archer, 1-17, or John Guy, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-19.

> merchant to heare all and say nothing: and if this be not the highest step of thraldome, there is no libertie or freedome.[85]

Nashe presented the paradox that the freedom of travel—the ability to go where one wishes—essentially amounted to slavery because one was always at the mercy of strangers. If travel was related to freedom and privilege, Nashe presented an opposing image—of travail and humiliation as illustrated by Jack Wilton's experiences. While this was before the age of the grand tour, many gentlemen did travel through Europe, and it was considered part of a complete education and a key to refinement.[86] Nashe attacked this practice by undermining the arguments for travel and by counterpoising the benefits of travel with the attendant dangers. He did this by selecting various destinations such as France, Spain and Italy and attacking both these nations and their peoples.

Wilton voices typical English xenophobia when he attacks foreigners (and what an Englishman can learn from foreigners). His first target is France and Frenchman, and in this passage he dwells particularly on the pox: "what is there in *Fraunce* to bee learned more than in *England*, but falshood in fellowship, perfect slovenrie, to love no man but for my pleasure, to sweare *Ah par la mort Dieu* when a mans hammes are scabd."[87] In France, Wilton discovers a predisposition to vice which is opposed to the native virtues of England. Foreign cultures are viewed as degenerate and rife with blasphemous practices. In his poxy (scabbed hams) picture of the French, Wilton finds that they will teach deceit, slovenliness and unabashed self-advancement—or in other words moral corruption, which is complemented by their French disease.

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[85] Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveler* in *The Works,* vol. 2, 93.
[86] Hilliard, 151.
[87] Nashe, *Traveler,* 95.

Wilton's first three French insults were more often found among the frequent, anti-Semitic jibes used to attack usurers in literature of the period. However, Wilton is just beginning; he also combines blasphemy with pox imagery. The blasphemy of this criticism is particularly significant since Wilton was subscribing to the commonly held belief that the pox like the plague was a curse from God; therefore, the French were cursing God because of the punishment he had inflicted upon them for their vices. After further upbraiding the French, Wilton returns to the pox for his conclusion, stating that the French can teach an Englishman "to esteeme of the pox as a pimple, to weare a velvet patch on their face, and walke melancholy with their Armes folded."[88] The first insult was a typical xenophobic statement—the pox was so common in France that it was of no more concern to the French than acne. English authors viewed Italy, Spain or France as syphilis' place of origin. Of the three, France was the most popular choice, hence the names "French disease" and "*morbus gallicus*."

Next Wilton ridicules the fashion of an emasculated, pocky Frenchman striking a melancholy pose: an effeminate preoccupation with style that impressionable English gulls find attractive and worthy of emulating. The Frenchman's melancholy air revealed an inherent pockiness. Contemporary opinion held that melancholy occurred when "the body works on the mind," and it could be caused not only by an excess of "venery" but also by "precedent diseases, [such] as agues, pox, and c. or temperature innate."[89] As a result, melancholy, which was considered a fashionable affliction, was incontrovertibly associated with syphilis. If the Frenchman's melancholic mannerisms were pockified, his velvet patch was an obvious contrivance to disguise the ravages of syphilis-induced tissue necrosis in the

[88] Nashe, *Traveler*, 95.
[89] Burton, A1^{v}.

same way that copper, silver or gold prosthesis were fashioned to replace pox-destroyed noses—a practice that was also frequently mocked in period literature.

Nashe's interest in vice, pox, and foreignness continued until the end of his career, and he developed the metaphor with increasing facility. His later works almost exclusively featured the pox in consumption-corruption metaphors. In *Lenten Stuffe*, published in 1599, Nashe presented an even more vitriolic diatribe against foreign vice:

> The posterior Italian and Germane cornugraphers, sticke not to applaude and cannonize unnaturall sodomitrie, the strumpet errant, the goute, the ague, the dropsie, the sciatica, follie, drunckennesse, and *slovenry*.[90]

Nashe warned his readers of wild satyr-like Italian and German writers that imported vice via corrupt literary texts.[91] Through their writing, they canonized or made blasphemous actions fashionable. In particular, German and Italian cornugraphers glorified deviant sexuality: "sodomitrie" refers to homosexuality and strumpetry to general female incontinence and prostitution. Nashe connected the sins and socially unacceptable practices that these authors presented alongside what would have been viewed as each vice's concomitant disease, as a result, he integrated the afflictions of gout, ague, dropsy, and sciatica, into a catalogue that included the vices that these writers taught: intemperance, sloth and sexual immorality. Gout, ague, sciatica and dropsy were all the afflictions of the drunk, glutton or lecher. For Nashe, the Italian and German cornugraphers and their diseases warranted a short mention; the brunt of the pockified diatribe was reserved for the French, as it was in *The Unfortunate Traveler*. Again, the French and the French disease are special targets of mockery:

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[90] Thomas Nashe, *Lenten Stuffe,* vol. 3, 177.

[91] Cornuted was used as a euphemism for cuckolded, so the cornugrapher's horns could be the horns of a cuckold; however, cornugrapher literally means "horned writer." I believe that this is to say that they are satyrs/satirists, and in this instance, I believe that satyr image is more appropriate.

> The *Galli Gallinacei*, or cocking French swarme every pissing while in their primmer editions, *Imprimeda jour duy*, of the unspeakeable healthfull condiciblenesse of the *Gomorrian* great *Poco*, a *Poco*, their true countriman every inch of him, the prescript lawes of *Tennis* or *Balonne* (which is most of their gentlemens chiefe livelyhoodes) the commoditie of hoarsenes, bleare-eyes, scabd hams, threed-bare cloakes, potcht eggs, and *Panados*.[92]

In a fantastic example of Nashe's over-the-top exuberance, he turned from the Italian and Germans to devote his full attention to French authors. The French are cockerels—roosters. They are a swarm that pisses out *Imprimeda jour duys*, or works printed today—perhaps representing Nashe's subliminal fear of drowning in French literary effluvia. From the cocky, cocking French cockerels—that call to mind sexuality and braggadocio, Nashe moved onto the pox. Frenchmen and syphilis are synonymous; as a result, the pox is represented by Poco, a personification of Gallic literary folly.

Like German and Italian works, Nashe viewed Gallic texts as exports, and his primary concern was that they were tainted or more specifically poxed. The image of Poco, a syphilitic Frenchman, as representative of French literary output is tantamount to saying that French texts are pockified, diseased, and dangerous. Both Nashe and Harvey shared this fear that dangerous texts and rhetoric could infect the commonwealth.[93] (Although Nashe's fear of Gallic influence seems real, it must have been somewhat ironic as well, since Nashe's description of Poco is stylistically reminiscent of the Rabelaisian verbosity that Harvey claimed had corrupted Nashe six years before in the 1593 publication of *A New Letter of Notable Contents*.)[94]

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[92] Nashe *Lenten Stuffe,* 177.
[93] Hilliard, 81.
[94] Nashe had not forgotten Harvey's pocky slander: in *Saffron Walden,* he equates Harvey's texts with syphilitic corruption. He mocks Harvey's pedantic word-palette: "Tropologicall! O embotched and truculent! No French gowtie-leg, with a gamash upon it is so gotchie and boystrous." Nashe is saying that Harvey's vocabulary is grotesque, sore-ridden and poxed. "French gout" is a reference to syphilis;

If German and Italian literary exports infect England with deviant sexuality, whorishness, gluttony and intemperance, French literature serves the same end but with still more disastrous, syphilitic consequences. In following the idea that texts are exports and commodities, Nashe touched upon the xenophobic fear of rampant and unhealthy foreign mercantilism flourishing in England and at the expense of native craftsmen and economies. Maria O'Neill related the negative connection between imported words and goods:

> The negative effects of imported goods are a theme which resurfaces again and again in both economic and linguistic treatises in which borrowed words and foreign importations are virtually interchangeable."[95]

Nowhere is O'Neill's statement more appropriate than in *Lenten Stuffe.* Nashe not only combined the dangerous effect of foreign goods and words but also included foreign texts and disease. As a result, he presented French texts as pockified. The pox symptoms within these texts become representative of French trade commodities in general, and the most famous of early modern French exports: the French disease. Nashe has now changed the focus: derision of foreign texts is combined with English fears of mercantile competition. He mocks the threat of French mercantilism: the Poco is a Frenchman and syphilis is a great French (literary) export. The labeling of the symptoms is actually a conflation of French commodities, behaviors and the French disease. Nashe called the French export, "the commoditie of hoarsenes, bleare-eyes, scabd hams, threed-bare cloakes, potcht eggs, and *Panados.*" Hoarseness and scabbed hams were two well-known syphilis symptoms. Bleary eyes may represent an early stage of syphilis-induced blindness. With threadbare cloaks and panados, Nashe moved the focus away from syphilis to the type of person that might get the disease: a spendthrift weakling. According to the *OED*, Panado was a

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as a result, Nashe was saying that a syphilitic was not as horrid as Harvey's prosody. Nashe, *Saffron Walden,* 41.

[95] María O'Neill, "Of Clothing and Coinage," *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature,* ed. Mike Pincombe (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 166.

Portuguese word for a doughy-bread-like food. Its doughy plasticity was used to describe pliable and weak individuals such as in Shakespeare's image of wayward, pox-inclined boys: "the unbak'd and doughy youth of a nation" (*Alls Well that Ends Well,* 4.5.4-5) who stood to be behaviorally infected by Parolles' lecherous example and then pathogenically infected with the pox through their actions.[96] By combining texts with images of trade goods and poxy corruption, Nashe augmented the conflation of consumption and corruption to include ideas as well as goods and items that threatened infect the commonwealth.

Nashe may have also found the basis for the representation of the pox itself as a commodity in *Quip* where Greene's pocky Frenchman was intended to arouse native Londoners' prejudice against foreigners. Greene's tirade against the Dutch and French revealed his populist loyalties:

> And so for Chandlers, and all other occupations, they are wronged by the Dutch and French. And therefore sith the Commons hates them, they cannot be my friends, and therefore let them be launching to Flushing, for they shall be no triers of my controversie.[97]

The common people hated the French and Dutch merchants in London; therefore, Greene hated them. According to Greene, the English consumers that bought foreign vices were not the healthy middle class artisans but those of the "velvet britches fraternity," or a foppish segment of the upper class which supported foreign fashions and deprived English craftsmen.[98] This taste for foreign fashion was not only ridiculous but also contributed to the decay of English society. Upper-class men that followed fashion became effeminate, their women whorish, and all were poxed. If

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[96] Lafeau argues that Parolles was trying to make all weak and wayward youths "in his color" (*Alls Well that Ends Well,* 4.5.5); this is to say both like him in personality and poxed like him. See Nicholas Jacobs, "Saffron and Syphilis: *All's Well that Ends Well* IV.v. 1-3," *Notes and Queries* 22.4 (1975).
[97] Greene, *Quip,* H1[r].
[98] Greene, *Quip,* H1[r].

Greene attacked foreign craftsmen and Nashe inveighed against alien literature, both authors reflected the same fear of foreign infection and domination.

In the 1590s, the Wits resurrected the pox metaphor. By borrowing classical images and combining them with native invective, they made the pox a marketable metaphor for deception, decay and decadence. They employed this image most effectively to voice fears of economic, psychological and political upheaval. The fear of out-of-control women reached epidemic proportions in the rapid urbanization of English (and particularly London) culture. London's booming growth undermined the paradigm of the small, ordered community that was considered the traditional social foundation. City life had allowed women previously unknown freedoms since the beginning of the early modern period; however, continued urbanization had also enflamed fears within the patriarchal mind that were manifested in an obsession with cuckoldry and pox-infected women. As a result, women came to be viewed as predatory sources of danger. This fear is represented in the images of women as Lamia, sirens, serpents, bees and scorpions. The rapid urbanization of London also generated economic fears. Competition with alien craftsmen was combined with fears about the corrupting influence of foreign goods and degenerate continental fashion and intellectualism in pocky parodies that reflected the decay of both individuals and the commonwealth.

When the Wits introduced the pox metaphor into popular literature, they reshaped conventional images to illustrate common cultural fears about the effect of gender issues, trade practices and ideologies on the commonwealth. In all these examples, the writers are voicing concerns about what might be fundamentally be described as sexual, economic or ideological transactions. This essentially journalistic effort is a commentary on the changing social, political and economic

milieu of late Elizabethan London. England's rapid change from a traditional society into an emerging capitalistic entity is the over-riding and perhaps subconscious concern within these works. The Wits and their society were grappling with what still remains the fundamental precept of capitalism:

> One set of messages of the society we live in is: Consume. Grow. Do what you want. Amuse yourselves. The very workings of this economic system, which has bestowed these unprecedented liberties, most cherished in the form of physical mobility and material prosperity depends on encouraging people to defy limits. Appetite is *supposed* to be immoderate. The ideology of capitalism makes us all into connoisseurs of liberty—of the indefinite expansion of possibility.[99]

Capitalism teaches people to consume, and the Wits and their contemporaries were arguing that consumption, especially of an excessive nature, leads to dissolution, decay and the pox.

In the microcosm of the Wits' world, one can see the image of emerging capitalism. They were professional writers seeking patronage with their pens. Paradoxically they sought their fortune by condemning the changes that they see around them—the same changes that created the fickle market for their texts. Though often based on traditional complaints, their attacks were all colored by the changing socio-economic system. Thus, ancient xenophobia was redefined by economic elements of fashion, trade and print. Even the most traditional diatribes against women focused on the city wife and her new opportunities to pursue vice in a city full of newly imported fashions, goods and sins. In short, the immoderate appetites that Sontag identified in modern capitalism also existed in the early modern period and inspired popular writers to conflate consumption and corruption. This is to say that an

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[99] Susan Sontag, "AIDS and its Metaphors," *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 163.

opinion in early modern England was that excessive consumption and corruption were one and the same. Authors, like Greene and Nashe, were not talking about all consumption but that which is decadent, excessive or foreign. In this proto-capitalist world of unrestrained appetite, consumption itself was corrupt, grotesque, threatening and pockified. Goods, fashion, ideas and texts were all poxed to illustrate how corrupt consumption not only infected individuals but the whole of the commonwealth.

Chapter 5

The Verse Satirists

> The myth of the golden age, an imaginary past [...] was both potent and potentially subversive. It challenged a belligerent, capitalist, hierarchic society to justify its values.[1]
>
> There is no beast more savage and dangerous than a human being who is swept along by the passions of ambition, greed, anger, envy, extravagance and sensuality.[2]

Verse Satire and the Culture of Melancholy

The pox metaphor continued to develop even as the Elizabethans' penchant for prose vitriol (as exemplified by the popularity of the Harvey-Nashe feud) developed into a new vogue for verse satire. The exuberant, carnivalesque images exhibited by the Wits were succeeded by dark, crude, violent images inspired by Juvenal. This change is illustrated by Neil Rhodes in his comparison of the work of Nashe and Marston: "while there are undoubtedly elements of a rhetoric of physical violence throughout Nashe's writing, it is positively cheerful by comparison with the frenzied vituperations of Elizabethan verse satire, and of Marston in particular."[3] These "frenzied vituperations" are characteristic of the satyr persona that the verse satirists adopted. The Wits' more grim subjects such as the pox were naturally appropriated by the verse satirists who found much to add to the "secretiveness,

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[1] Julia Briggs, *This Stage-Play World* (1983; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 37.
[2] Desiderius Erasmus, "On Education for Children," trans. Beert C. Verstraete, *The Erasmus Reader,* ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 73.
[3] Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 137.

shame, malice and bigotry surrounding the 'foul disease.'"[4] The Wits' images of poxy, commodified transactions, which threatened to infect the English commonwealth, were thrust to the forefront of the verse satirists' concerns, and the social commentary behind the Wits' pox metaphors gave way to the verse satirists' fascination with corruption itself. This is to say that the Wits appropriated pox images to describe their concerns about dangerous exchange, whereas the verse satirists, while maintaining several of the same conceptual models of corrupt exchange, became less interested in the social issues which motivated the Wits' pox images and more concerned with the stylized ideal of pervasive corruption itself.[5] It is as if the verse satirists were more interested in achieving a poxy, melancholic style rather than engaging the issues that made the pox a descriptive element in the first place.

The genres of verse and prose satire had, in fact, been evolving virtually at the same time. Prose satire, which had less of a tradition in English literature, experienced a sudden, brilliant evolution in the early 1590s when the University Wits attained artistic maturity but before their short lives came to an end. Verse satire, with its great heritage that included Chaucer, Gower, the Piers poet, Dunbar and Skelton had largely been neglected for the majority of the sixteenth century; however, this was to change in the last years of the 1590s. Thomas Lodge published the verse satire *A Fig for Momus* in 1595, and Hall, Marston, Guilpin, and Middleton followed

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[4] Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994), 28.

[5] The more cynical viewpoint of the verse satirists may have been influenced not only by influences such as Juvenal and Persius, but by observation of that first generation of professional writers, the Wits. The Wits were quite remarkable for their generally short life spans, inability to secure long term patronage and poverty. While some of the verse satirists did suffer economic hardship, most of them came from wealthier backgrounds and were able to eventually secure livelihoods, often within the church. All the verse satirists that I discuss were writing satires at an early age, before they secured positions (and quit writing satire). They would have been familiar with the hardships of the Wits: by the time that most of the verse satirists were publishing (1597-1599), Greene, Marlowe and Peele were already dead, and Nashe was exiled and hiding in Yarmouth.

suit, publishing several verse satires between 1597 and 1599, when the suppression of these scandalous tracts silenced or subverted the printed life of this flourishing genre.

As the century came to close, verse satire further propelled pox imagery into the culture's consciousness. The Wits had done much to develop pox rhetoric from simple disease-invective into a complex metaphor. The verse satirists, like Greene and Nashe, continued to present complex pox images that alluded to not only diseased bodies but also diseased states, foreigners (and foreignness), intellectual property, fashion, and morality, but their images were more a matter of style than discursive substance as they focused on creating a commodified world through the images generated from the conflation of consumption and corruption. If the verse satirists were more interested in developing a pockifed style, part of that style was the creation of a dark, diseased and commodified world. The idea seems to have emerged from the writings of the Wits. As early as 1588, Nashe was raging against out-of-control commodification. In *The Anatomie of Absurdities*, he convincingly portrays a worldview that he increasingly described in terms of commodities and transactions. Of romantic and love poets, he says "they to no Common-wealth commoditie, tosse over their troubled imaginations to have the praise of learning that they lack."[6] Nashe was railing against the lack of propriety in unqualified poets that write unlearned verse: an act that had no salubrious effect upon the commonwealth. Nashe's judgment of love poets was more than a little ironic since his own qualifications were considered questionable; furthermore, a few years later, he would write the scandalously erotic poem, *A Choice of Valentines*. Despite his dubious standpoint, Nashe was expressing an argument against poetic effluvia that directly corresponded to his other complaints against uncontrolled, unreliable and unauthoritative ideas,

[6] Thomas Nashe, *The Anatomie of Absurditie*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 1.

texts and trade goods that mark many of his works—ideas that must have also occupied the minds of his readers.

The idea of commodification and the social ire and unrest it generated had a history in the popular fiction of the coney-catching tracts which began appearing in England as early as the first half of the sixteenth century. Coney-catching pamphlets:

> Express through fiction, narrative and other literary devices, prevalent concerns about morality and social transformation... They articulate concerns over increased vagrancy and geographic mobility, signaled in the Welsh and Irish population of the underworld; over "masterless men"; over the decline in hospitality that is breaking up traditional communities."[7]

Coney-catching tracts expressed some of the first literary instances of social unease reflected by the burgeoning elements of capitalism and urbanization in England. The idea was expanded to address themes of excessive and corrupt consumerism, and it constituted a defining presence within the works of the Wits, but for the verse satirists' it became what might be described as their definitive subject. The verse satirists' utilized extensive pox metaphors to describe the corrupt transactions that threatened to engulf their world. In the rapid and unsettling transition to a society dominated by capitalism, the satirists were responding to the discovery that "a money economy cannot allow gold to lie idle; instead it must be used ceaselessly to engender more"—this sentiment prompted the satirists to identify London's rampant capitalism with the sin of avarice and the "spirit of usury which had become the norm, causing the profit motive to override all other considerations."[8] In response to this, the verse satirists scourge the unchecked appetites of London.

As the genre developed in the final years of the century, a Juvenalian strain emerged as Middleton, Guilpin and Marston focused increasingly on wild, pockified

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[7] Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.
[8] Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare, Sex and the Print Revolution* (London: Athlone: 1996), 139.

metaphors that illustrated the complete commodification of desire and what might be described as a free market of will. The satirists' fascination with will itself revealed a complex socio-sexual-political conundrum. It was thought that will resulted in monstrosities of tyranny, financial ruin, crime and religious perversion; however, will most often manifested itself in topoi of a sexual nature. The themes of wit and will, of corrupt consumption, and of social unrest were often addressed by the prose satirists, and as I will discuss in the next chapter, they also appeared to be a central interest of the theater. This shared interest was the result of social pressures wrought on English and particularly London society in its transformation to an emerging capitalist economy. The change was often imagined to be part of the degeneration from an idealized vision of an integrated and ordered feudal community that was being replaced by what the satirists saw as out-of-control individuation. In this new world, the verse satirists saw instability and vice in everything. As a result, they paraded before their readers a virtual city of masterless men and women: captains, bawds, prostitutes, panders, usurers, whoremasters, vagabonds and thieves to name a few. Many of these men and women are masterless, or without a place in society: they had migrated to the city, fleeing from greedy landowners who had driven them off the land with exorbitantly high rents or evicted them in favor of enclosure and more profitable sheep husbandry. Tradition was further eroded by the extinction of ancient families after spendthrift heirs rapidly consumed their patrimony in an orgy of lavish spending. The recurring philosophy for all these characters was the realization of desire and the expression of will without any thought of consequences. The satirists attacked the idea that if one wills, and is willing to do what it takes, one can have. An excess of will infects the subjects of verse satire; as a result, the seemingly honest citizen or demure housewife hypocritically maintains a façade of respectability

while committing the same sins of acquisition and desire that he and she publicly condemns. As part of this world, even the satirist was infected by the will, appetite and vice which he reproved. In this world consumption was corruption, and in the verse satirists' metaphors the pox is a favorite signifier of the decay of not only individuals but also of morals, ideas, literature and the commonwealth itself.

The Satyr

Before looking at verse satire, it is necessary to describe the persona-model which the verse satirists universally assumed. Verse satirists of the late sixteenth century often wrote from the perspective of a satyr-persona. An unusual misunderstanding contributed to the overt sexualization of the sixteenth-century satyr: "the term 'satire' was thought to derive from the satyr figure, and was spelt accordingly."[9] As a result during the sixteenth century, English authors confused satire, the genre, and the satyr, the mythological creature which was said to be a man above the waist and a goat below (see Fig. 7).[10] As a result, for almost a century "satyre" was the homonymous signifier for both definitions. Traditional English satirists such as Piers Plowman and Skelton's Colyn Clout offered rough, rude, native simplicity as a counterpoint to the decadent, irreverent, vice-ridden figures of the court and church. The late sixteenth-century satirists borrowed from the Piers tradition in which the satirist was presented as a natural, untainted simple man. However, satyr-satire confusion added a twist to the tradition: the mythological satyr was also a creature of nature that was associated with pagan priapism. The resulting persona is:

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[9] Rhodes, *Eloquence,* 138.

[10] According to the *OED*, the earliest evidence of the word "satire" appearing in English is in Alexander Barclay's *Ship of Fools* (1509). Isaac Casaubon seems to have been the first to comment on his contemporaries' conflation of satyr and satire in his translation of Persius. See Isaac Casaubon, *Persius* (Paris, 1605).

> No longer the morally earnest, blunt Piers or Colin... the satirist is "satyr," outraged, rough, abusive, lascivious, and frank, according to the popular conception of the satyr as half-man, half goat, from which it was thought the word *satire* derived, and in keeping in the spirit of the persona of Juvenal, whom the Elizabethans were trying to imitate.[11]

The satirists' hybrid of these two disparate personas is a bestial creature that whips itself into frenzy of rage. The outrage of the satyr is, in itself, somewhat ambiguous since, as the verse satirists' satyrs often imply and sometimes freely admit, they are guilty of the sins that they castigate. This ambiguity may have yielded associations of the fleshy, bestial nature of the satyr and their preferred topic: the sin of lust. The perception of the satyr as lecherous was revealed in John Florio's *A World of Wordes.* Florio's definition of "*Satiriari, Satiriasmis,*" is "the standing of a mans yard, lust–pride, pricke–pride or priapisme."[12] The definition was based on knowledge of the satyr plays presented in festivals of the classical period. These early comedies involved a male cast, all of whom bore giant phalluses. According to Andrew McRae, "Elizabethan theory held that satire originated in Greek satyr plays," and under this influence "satirists shaped their own satiric personae in accordance with this mythological figure."[13] Florio's connection of satyrs with rampant, prideful sexuality revealed that the honest simplicity of traditional English satire had been undermined by knowledge of the bestial, sexual nature of the satyr; as a result, the traditional satirists' purity was supplanted by an unrestrained sexuality. The dichotomy between the innocent purity of native English satire of the Piers tradition was contraposed with the illicit wildness and corruption of the priapistic satyr. The

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[11] D. Allen Carroll, introduction, *Skialetheia,* by Edward Guilpin (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 12.
[12] John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes or Most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English* (London, 1598), Ff4 ^{v}.
[13] Andrew McRae, "The Verse Libel: Popular Satire in Early Modern England," *Subversion and Scurrility*, eds. Dermot Cavanagh and Tim Kirks (Ashgate: Aldershot, UK: 2000), 66.

lustful satyr could not innocently scourge wrong-doers because he was guilty of the same desires and perhaps the same sins, of those whom he castigated. The knowledge that the satyr-personas discovered in the process of scourging reveals a sense of personal moral corruption as well as a fear that they are tainted by the degenerate world around them.

Satirical Punishment and Surgery

Perhaps as a result of the satyr's sexual-moral contradictions, the verse satirists whip, scourge, purge, and excise vice in a literal frenzy. The satirists' rage finds a target in the increasingly vicious commercialization of London and the commodification of all goods and services. The focus on degeneration and consumption became inherently pocky when it was coupled with a mode of description based on the Renaissance convention of what Harris described as "analogies between *physis* and *polis*."[14] This is to say, that the satirists saw London as a degenerate place, and in the language of the time, illness and corruption of the society, or commonwealth, were described in corporeal terms.

Medicine and discovery, both in an internal, or anatomical, and external sense, are fundamental to the descriptive process of Elizabethan writers, and medical and anatomical terms, processes and ideas are embraced and applied to the larger world. Michael Schoenfeldt, in discussing the medical and epistemological language of Shakespeare's sonnets, identified this process as "the profound medical and physiological underpinnings of Shakespeare's acute vocabulary of psychological inwardness."[15] Schoenfeldt's identification of Shakespeare's medical fascination may

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[14] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 141.
[15] Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 75.

be expanded to explain a broad fascination of the late Elizabethans in which "physiological terminology" was employed by authors "because the job of the doctor, like that of the playwright and poet, was to intuit inner reality via external demeanor. Lyric poet and medical doctor, then, are both students of inwardness."[16] The juxtaposition of literary and medical illness and treatment was not only indicative of Shakespeare's sonnets but of an era fascinated with physicality and inwardness.

Lodge and Donne

The complexity of the satyr persona most clearly manifested itself in the satirical works of John Donne. Indeed, it is possible that Donne may have first developed the paradigm of the conflicted satyr that the other verse satirists come to use as a persona. The actual date and provenance of Donne's satires is a matter of some contention since they were not published until after his death, but many critics suspect that Donne penned the poems in the early 1590s and the majority accept a period between 1587 and 1598.[17] Donne's satires share a stylistic affinity with the work of Thomas Lodge, another early verse satirist, in that their satyr personas are gentler than the heavy-handed representations created by Guilpin, Marston, Middleton and Hall. Nevertheless, critics also group Donne with Hall, Marston and Guilpin because of their remarkable similarities: all were talented, educated young men of respectable backgrounds; all chose in their youth to embrace the form of verse satire as a means of criticizing the decadence and corruption that they saw in their age, and all later became churchmen.[18] Despite these several similarities that Donne shared with his slightly younger contemporaries, his verse satire sounds more like those

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[16] Schoenfeldt, 75.
[17] John Donne, *John Donne: The Complete English Poems,* ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Everyman, 1994), 153.
[18] Scholars suspect but are not certain that Guilpin took holy orders.

written by Lodge rather than the wild versification and irrational anger and dissent of the later satirists. Suffice it to say, it seems likely that Donne is, at the least, reacting to the literary tastes of an educated London readership at the end of the sixteenth century, which may very well have been instrumental in shaping the satyr persona. He shared with all verse satirists an interest in metaphors of anatomization as well as medical representations of vice as a physical disease—images that the verse satirists borrowed from Greene, Harvey, and Nashe and further exploited for the benefit of their readers. Donne's satyr also exhibits a divisive psychological complexity that appears to have been a new dimension of the satyr persona. Donne took the conflicted facets of the satyr persona and shaped them into a believable and psychologically complex whole.[19] He did this by presenting a persona with what seems to be dual personalities. The satyr loathes the humorist: a character so named for his psychologically-distorting imbalance of humors.[20] Nevertheless, Donne's satyr exhibits a complete inability to deny the humorist's wishes. While the humorist may be meant to be another character, it is equally plausible that the studious satyr and the humorist are warring elements of the same psyche.

In this environment, syphilis appeared in medically-inspired images of vice and corruption. Syphilis imagery plays a role in three of Donne's five satires (*Satyres I, II,* and *IV*), and it is used in commentaries on personal and societal decay. For Donne, societal disintegration was the result of foolish, loose morality in London. Donne's satirical subjects were all-consuming privileged men, and their world was a vain, decadent, lecherous and shallow place. Nevertheless, Donne's satyr is attracted

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[19] Jonathan Sawday explores a later example of Donne's representation of warring elements within a single psyche in the poem "The Extasie." Sawday finds that Donne presents a Cartesian image of body, which contains the intelligence and the spirit—two often incongruous forces. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London: Routledge, 1995), 146-158.

[20] Ben Jonson's greatest dramatic success was in his plays, such as *Every Man in His Humor* (1598) in which he developed the comedy of humors—a genre dedicated to the psychological anatomization of humorist characters.

to the appetitive world around him. Perhaps paradoxically, his satyr begins by praising the intellectual world of the scholar.[21] In "Satyre I," Donne's studious satyr persona is literally drawn into the streets by the humorist, his gull-like acquaintance. In the first lines, the satyr juxtaposes the peace and good company of his study with the raging streets of London. Donne's satyr asks his visitor, the "fondling motley humorist," to leave him in peace, "Leave mee, and in this standing wooden chest,/ Consorted with these few bookes, let me lye."[22] The satyr's wooden chest is his study—a place where he is both comfortable and in good company among: "Gods conduits, grave Divines."[23] Here he dwells in modest simplicity amongst his volumes, wearing the "course attire" of "beasts skin."[24] The satyr's books provide him with proper and inspiring company in the form of great thinkers and writers, and he wonders why he should "leave all this constant company,/ And follow headlong, wild uncertaine thee?"[25] Hall would later create a similar beginning to *Virgidemiarum*, in which he praised an isolated life of study:

> Oh let me lead an Academicke life,
> To know much, and to thinke we nothing know;
> Nothing to have, yet thinke we have enough,
> In skill to want, and wanting seeke for more,
> In weale nor want, nor wish for greater store;
> Envye ye Monarchs with your proud excesse:
> At our low Sayle, and our hye Happinesse.[26]

Hall, who at the time was a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, imitated Donne's vision of the scholar's chest. Hall likened the life of an academic to paradisiacal state. These images are borrowed from earlier texts, such as Erasmus'

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[21] Grace Tiffany, in discussing the opening lines of *Skialetheia,* suggests that Guilpin's satyr desires solitude in an attempt to remove himself from the corruption of London life; this can also be said for Donne and Hall's satyrs as well. Grace Tiffany, *Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters* (Newark, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1995), 62.
[22] John Donne, "Satyre I," *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 3.
[23] Donne, "Satire I," 3.
[24] Donne, "Satire I," 3.
[25] Donne, "Satire I," 3.
[26] Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum, The Last Three Bookes,* (London, 1598), D4^{v}-E1^{r}.

The Epicure, which praises "the godly pleasures of the mynde" as opposed to the false, "coloured pleasures of ye body."[27] While study is a pleasure that is pleasing to God, Erasmus instructed against the false pleasures of the world, such as the "hauntynge of whores," which result in the:

> Newe leprosie, now oterwyse named Jobs agew and some cal it the scabbes of Naples, through which desease they feele often ye most extreme and cruell paines of deathe even in this lyfe and cary a bodye resembling very much some dead coarse or carryn.[28]

Hall and Donne's learned satyrs present themselves as individuals in a divine state when in their studies and safe from the pockified pleasures of the world.[29] Both satyrs are moved to abandon their studies and pick up the corded scourge to attack vice. Donne's satyr eventually decides to accompany the humorist into the "wild uncertainty" of the London streets, and embarks on a trip into something like a Dante-inspired version of hell: the humorist, an anti-Virgil, guides the satyr, a somewhat virtuous Dante, through the shameful sights and sins of a pockified London. The reason why the satyr agrees to go is because he is powerless to do otherwise: he seizes upon the pretext that the humorist is trying to reform himself, but his cynicism and general disdain for his fellow makes this argument unconvincing.

As soon as they enter into the streets, the humorist very clearly proves that he is not reformed by immediately embracing the debauched London that the satyr despises. However, the satyr does not abandon him; instead, he follows him deeper into the underworld and appears powerless to change their course or disentangle

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[27] Desiderius Erasmus, *A Very Pleasaunt and Fruitful Diologue Called the Epicure,* trans. Philip Gerrard (London, 1545), D3^{r}, EEBO, internet, 29 August 2004.

[28] Erasmus, *The Epicure,* D1^{v}-D2^{r}. I have used Gerrard's Tudor translation instead of Thompson's modern one because Gerrard has made the pox description more colorful. Erasmus uses the tem "Naples itch," which Gerrard expands into the new leprosie, Job's ague and the scab of Naples. See Desiderius Erasmus, *The Colloquies of Erasmus,* trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 543.

[29] Some critics believe that Hall was not aware of Donne's satires in 1597, since their friendship does not appear to have flourished until a later date. Nonetheless, there are several similarities in their satires.

himself from the humorist's company and capable only of harsh commentary. Lawrence Manley argued that "the urgent but futile attempt to win over a young companion, a mirror of the speaker" was an innovation on classical satire by the Elizabethans.[30] This process might be taken one step further. Manley's mirror image of the persona might actually be viewed as two warring elements of the same personality—that of the out-of-balance humorist, and the harmonious satyr-persona.[31] Therefore, the inability of the satyr to separate himself from the humorist might just as easily imply two minds trapped in a single body, rather than two distinct individuals.

In this context, the humorist knocking on the satyr's door may be as the personification of desire and sin. This is to say that the humorist may not be a person but a desire for the distractions of London life, in much the same way as vices and virtues appeared as characters in the morality plays that Donne probably witnessed in his youth. The satyr's disdain for the humorist makes one wonder: what motivation might make the satyr join the humorist? The satyr states that he is in the good company of his books and safely cloistered in his study. If the satyr and the humorist are not conflicting elements of the same personality, then the satyr at least recognizes that he is the twin of the humorist in that the satyr realizes that he is prone to the same desires and subject to the same faults as the humorist. In this scenario then, the

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[30] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 379.

[31] There may be an additional twist to the Donne satyr's psychological disjunction. If he and the humorist are elements of the same character and if the satyr persona is not aware of it, he is a beast. E. M. W. Tillyard explains this concept:

> there was another subject of understanding which, all were agreed, was paramount; and that was yourself [...] Far from being a sign of modesty, innocence, or intuitive virtue, not to know yourself was to resemble the beasts, if not in coarseness, at least in deficiency of education.

Of course, ironically, Donne's persona, as a satyr, is a beast, and the humorist—implying a person who is the victim of out-of-balance humors—is warring for control of their psyche. E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; London: Penguin, 1990), 78.

satyr's scourging of the humorist and his friends might also be a punishment of self. This conflict is part of the larger satire/satyr confusion and a definitive element of the satyr's infatuation with corruption and immorality. If consumption is corruption, it is also internal conflict: the satyr's split personality, divided between desire and a strict moral code, yields a sense of guilt, degradation and hypocrisy which intensely colors the sexually-oriented outrage and confusion inherent to the persona and genre. Thus the satyr's ensuing voyage through the streets of London is a journey toward personal corruption that is seemingly inevitable in such a diseased environment.

The humorist's London is full of fops, fools, and gulls—many of whom bear the pocky marks of their sins, and it follows that the first syphilis reference is a comment on the pseudo-debonair attitudes of city gulls. This type of gull attempted to cultivate a cultured, well-traveled aura, which Donne and the Wits saw as an appropriation of foreign foolishness and corruption. The satyr and the humorist discuss one such character:

> But Oh, God strengthen thee, why stoop'st thou so?
> Why, he hath travalyd. Long? No but to me
> Which understand none, he doth seem to be
> Perfect French, and Italian; I replyed,
> So is the Poxe; He answered not, but spy'd
> More men of sorts, of parts, and qualities.[32]

While the well-traveled gull appropriates what he views as various stylish continental affectations, the satyr sees something quite different. To the humorist, the gull's stoop is probably a reference to the obsequious, low sweeping bow of a French courtier—a fashion that the gull and humorist find charming. The satyr sees, instead of an ornate bow, the stoop of a syphilitic, his joints pinched by the pox infection resulting in a stooped gait. Donne brings the image back to the fop's misplaced cosmopolitan fashion sense by hinting that he has acquired both his style and the pox

[32] Donne, "Satire I," 6.

from Italy and France. Instead of responding to the satyr's pocky jab, the humorist flits on to other "men of sorts, of parts, of qualities," and while this passage may again appear to be referring to men of good standing, accomplishments, lands, and name, the satyr's take on the sorts, parts and qualities will be more of the same: pocky corruption, foolishness, and vanity.

Donne's central syphilis images focus on conceptions of physico-moral corruption. Again borrowing from the Wits, Donne presented the idea that vice and pox, like continental goods and fashion, were communicable diseases that operated within specific parameters. The relationship was more complicated since vice—in and of itself, rather than the result of a specific contagious pathogen—might be seen to cause pox. In the same manner, the humorist's London has become an infective agent. Donne's satyr fears the city, and once he leaves his study, he cannot remain clean. It is not that the satyr persona believes he is pure to begin with but that whatever sin he holds in his heart, London will find and provide a temptation to suit that hidden desire. The humorist may represent the sin, vice or desire that the satyr so fears and attacks, and whether or not this sin is internal or external, the satyr fears corruption of self.

If the humorist is part of the same persona, then the satyr has compartmentalized the disease and fears infection of this section of his psyche. As a result, the satyr listens to the humorist's banter with both disgust and fear, and the humorist's gossip is portrayed as inconsequential and corrupt:

> Who wasts in meat, in clothes, in horse, he notes;
> Who loves Whores, who boyes, and who goats.
> I more amas'd then Circes prisoners, when
> They felt themselves turne beasts, felt my selfe then
> Becoming Traytor and mee thought I saw
> One of our Giant Statues ope his jaw

To sucke me in.[33]

The satyr is battered by the humorist's gossip. He feels that, like Odysseus' sailors, he will also turn traitor against himself and become a beast. Even the satyr with his violent, scourging nature claims to be shocked by the humorist's revelations of deviant sexuality. The degenerate nature of London is exemplified by the humorist's gossip, which also threatens to overcome the satyr.

In an added psychological twist which complements the satyr's psychological disjunction, the reader must also consider that "the whip which the satirist uses to punish villainy is, in fact, the Circean wand which transforms people into beasts in the first place."[34] This is to say that the gruesome city in which the satirists lived was, to some extent, a product of their imaginations, and the characters they created in their castigation of vice were the fruit of their own beastly imaginations.[35] This Circean image of men as pigs proved popular and is most likely based on a belief that "men are not men but beasts" with no apparent "possibility of change for the better."[36] Marston employs the image in *Scourge* when he likens Londoners to those men-become-pigs that inhabit Circe's isle when he calls out:

> A Man, man, a kingdome for a man [...]
> Thou Cynick dogge, see'st not streets do swarme
> With troupes of men? No, no, for Circes charme
> Hath turn'd them all to Swine."[37]

For Marston, the image also has an ideological resonance. Londoners, rather than being piggish in appearance, are porcine in their souls. As a result, he swears:

> The soules of swine
> Doe live in men, for that same radiant shine,
> That lustre wherewith natures Nature decked

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[33] Donne, "Satire IV," 18.
[34] Rhodes, *Eloquence,* 140.
[35] For a discussion of the dehumanizing paradigm of the satirical beast and the relation between androgyny and beastliness as correlated factors that threaten masculinity, see Tiffany, 54-56.
[36] Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse* (1959; Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976), 79.
[37] John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie* (London, 1599), E7^{r}.

> Our intellectuall part, that glosse is soyled
> With stayning spots of vile impietie,
> And muddy durt of sensualities."[38]

Donne's satyr expresses the fear that he will be engulfed by this pig-populated world that the humorist describes; London will, like a giant statue, "ope his jaw to sucke me in."[39] Ironically, the satyr—a wild creature—therefore fears the bestial nature of the Londoners. Edward Guilpin, a close contemporary of both Marston and Donne, combined the Circe myth and venereal disease imagery in his representation of a group of

> Contemporary lascivious poets drinking:
> A health to Circes, are in hogsties housde,
> Or els transformed to Goates lasciviously,
> Filthing chaste eares with theyr pens Gonorrhey.[40]

Guilpin imagined a group of drunken love poets as Circean pigs or lascivious goats whose pens/penises infect with contagious prurience. The amorous poets in this Circean transformation are changed first into pigs and then, even more appropriately, into lascivious, sexually diseased goats. In a passage which may have influenced Guilpin, Donne had previously created a metaphor of vice-venereal disease infection. If Guilpin suspected that filthy amorous poetry infected the innocent, Donne feared infection via forbidden knowledge. Listening to a lecher, Donne's satyr worries that he will catch the speaker's vices, and he illustrates this most important of images with a pox metaphor:

> For hearing him, I found
> That as burnt venome Leachers do grow sound
> By giving others their soares, I might growe
> Guilty, and he free.[41]

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[38] Marston, *Villanie* E7^{v}.
[39] Donne, "Satire IV," 18.
[40] Guilpin, C1^{r}.
[41] Donne, "Satire IV," 18.

In the same way that Nashe castigated the infecting influence of European texts imported into England or Guilpin derided the infections of English bawdy poets, Donne feared that contact with such lecherous testimony will pox him, and he will become diseased just as Odysseus' men were turned to pigs as a result of Circe's spells/knowledge. Donne's imagery has its basis in the early sixteenth-century medical conception that a syphilitic could cure himself through sex with a virgin. According to this theory, the poxed partner could free himself of his affliction by passing his disease onto a healthy sexual partner.[42] For the satyr, the burnt venomous lecher is the pocky gossiping humorist, who threatens to infect him with his gross outpouring of gossip—of filthy knowledge—that illuminates the diseased London world.

The satirists' disturbing images of innocence corrupted are complemented by a concurrent theme: hypocrisy and the subversive corruption of hidden sin, which is exemplified by Lodge's fascination with hypocritical dissimulation. In *A Fig for Momus* (1595), Thomas Lodge anticipated the flurry of verse satire publication that occurred between 1597 and 1599. While Donne was perhaps writing verse satire at an earlier date, it seems fitting that Lodge was the first to publish a major verse satire, since he was the individual who comes closest to bridging the divide between the Wits and the verse satirists. Lodge belonged to the Oxonian Wits—a group that predated the second generation Wits (Greene, Marlowe and Nashe). The Oxonian group, which included John Lyly, Thomas Watson, George Peele and Matthew Roydon, was active in London as early as 1581.[43] Unlike the other Wits, Lodge was

[42] For a discussion of the early sixteenth-century history of this philosophy (that the pox can be cured intercourse with a virgin), see: Winifred Schleiner, "Infection and Cure Through Women: Renaissance Constructions of Syphilis," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24.3 (1994), 499-517.
[43] Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 54.

the only one to both survive beyond the first decade of the seventeenth century and find any security or prosperity.[44]

While he shared a background with the Wits, Lodge also had much in common with the other verse satirists. Principally, he was a member of the Inns of Court and would have been accustomed to a social milieu that included Donne, Hall, Guilpin and Marston. While Lodge shared literary characteristics and biographical history with both prose and verse satirists, he essentially prefigured the thematic thrust of the later poets although he did not equal them in their ferocity. While *Momus* was the first major English verse satire to be published in the 1590s, Lodge would most likely have been aware of verse satires, such as those written by Donne, that were circulating in manuscript. Like the other verse satirists, Lodge was anxious to display his learning: his satires have a certain textual density, fraught with classical allusions and contemporary gossip. His exposure and condemnation of vice, which allied him to other verse satirists, was advanced by a presentation of characters inscribed with medico-anatomical imagery that seems to have fascinated him, in various guises, for the rest of his life.[45] His attack on the vices and their relation to poxy consumption and corruption foreshadows the biting verse satirists of the end of the century.

Momus sets the pocky tone for verse satire of the late sixteenth century—all succeeding sixteenth-century verse satires by Hall, Marston, Middleton and Guilpin focus on themes of excessive corrupt consumption and have at least one extended pox metaphor. Lodge's appears in the first section of *Momus* which he dedicates to the

[44] Only Lyly, who died penniless in 1606, and Lodge—who took a medical degree in Avignon in 1600 after converting to Catholicism and went on to become a successful doctor before dying in 1625—outlived Nashe. For more on the fate of the Wits, see Nicholl, 271.

[45] Not only would Lodge study medicine, but he would also continue writing. He published several medical and moralistic tracts. For example, see Thomas Lodge, *Treatise of the Plague* (London, 1603).

scourging of the pocky vice of lust. All of "Satyre I" is pockified, and in it, Lodge examines, not so much lust alone, but a pairing of the vice with hypocrisy:

> A letcher, that hath lost both flesh and fame,
> That holds not letcherie a pleasant game?
> And why? because they cloake their shame by this,
> And will not see the horror what it is.[46]

This first comment is directed toward individuals who might shroud their pox behind fashion. The disease of lust, a punishment for sin, rather than being an object of shame, is transmuted by some lechers into a sign of affirmation—a fashionable disfiguration. In the first four lines, Lodge asks why a lecher might expound the virtues of lechery—his answer is that he must extol the vice, for he has lost both flesh, through sexually transmitted disease, and fame, through the shame of, and disfiguration resulting from, his sin.

The lecher, therefore, has nothing left but to praise his fault as if it is a virtue: "And cunning sinne being clad in Vertues shape/ Flies much reproofe, and many scornes doth scape."[47] Lodge's lecher escapes his just condemnation through the deceit of "fashionable" lechery. In many ways, Lodge is echoing Nashe's comment on the French who esteem the pox as if it were a pimple. The diminution of syphilis to something inconsequential and even stylish (again, like the Frenchman's velvet patch) was a desperate ploy by poxed lechers to avoid defamation. After he glossed his message with these different approaches to concealing the pocky burden of sin, Lodge illustrated his idea with a vignette:

> Last day I chaunst (in crossing of the streete)
> With *Diffilus* the Inkeeper to meete,
> He wore a silken night-cap on his head,
> And lookt as if he had beene lately dead:
> I askt him how he far'd, not well (quoth he)
> An ague this two months hath troubled me;

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[46] Thomas Lodge, *A Fig for Momus* (London, 1595), B2^{r}.
[47] Lodge, *Fig*, B2^{r}.

> I let him passe: and laught to heare his skuce:
> For I knew well, he had the poxe by *Luce*.[48]

In this tableau, Lodge created a variation on the deceitfulness of a pocky lecher. Diffilus, rather than pretending that syphilis is a stylish affectation, attempts to conceal the ravages of pox behind a respectable ague. The satyr finds this alleged fever laughable since he knew that he "had the poxe by Luce." If syphilis has not marked Diffilus, the cure surely has, and he seeks to conceal the damage by wearing his night cap "ribbind at the eares,/ Because of late he swet away his heares."[49] Diffilus' pox-cure, presumably via a mercury treatment and sweating tub, has resulted in the loss of his ears. The ravages of both the pox and the mercury treatment were a grotesque object of fascination, derision, horror, and humor throughout the period.

For Lodge, however, as a satirist, the disease was not only an object of derision and a sign of immorality but also of hypocrisy, and whilst his satirist persona laughs at Diffilus' dissimulation, the inn keeper's hypocrisy arouses the satyr's indignation and contempt:

> But had a stranger, chanst to spie him than
> He might have deemd him for a civill man.
> Thus with the world, the world dissembles still,
> And to their owne confusions follow ill."[50]

If Lodge's satire is centered on moral indignation, then Diffilus' pocky hypocrisy is a central theme of the satire. The themes of hypocrisy that appear in several of the verse satirists' works were often related to syphilis. Like Diffilus, many pox victims attempted to conceal the damage of the pox and its cures with "heavy makeup, strong perfumes, copper noses and velvet patches... masks too became fashionable and [were] worn by both sexes from the mid-sixteenth century... the very real and sometimes horrific external bodily manifestations of the infection were intimately

[48] Lodge, *Fig*, B2^{r}.
[49] Lodge, *Fig*, B2^{r}- B2^{v}.
[50] Lodge, *Fig*, B2^{v}.

associated, then, with disguise."[51] Diffilus and his hypocrisy are aspects of a society in decay. Instead of actually behaving as a virtuous citizen, Diffilus is a victim of his own will. He has pursued his desire to his detriment, and then, hypocritically seeks to pretend to remain an upstanding citizen.

Lodge's representation of pocky satirical figures is similar to that of the University Wits. It was his offering of his ideas in verse form that prefigured the biting verse satire of the last years of the sixteenth century (1597-1600).[52] These poets satirized their society even more vehemently than the Wits. Themes involving the satirical scourging of stereotypical sinners, which were present throughout the sixteenth century, were earnestly pursued by the verse satirists. The works of all the satirists resonate with images of the scourging, purging, and excising of sin. The verse satirists, therefore, saw themselves as sorts of medical men who whip, purge, or cut evil from their neighbors. Such medical terminology fostered pocky images in which doctor-satirists surgically or sadistically removed corrupt, pockified sin from their patient-subjects.

Verse Satire 1597-1599: Hall, Marston, Guilpin and Middleton

John Marston, writing under the pseudonym of W. Kinsayder, first published *Pigmalion's Image and Certayne Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie* in 1598. Marston's cousin Edward Guilpin published *Skialethia* in the same year, and together they joined forces to flyte against Joseph Hall who had published his first satire,

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[51] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 129-130.

[52] That Lodge prefigures the verse satirists is not incidental; rather, the distinction is an arbitrary one. Most scholars attribute the rise of verse satire to Hall's claim to have introduced satire to England. His claim is, in actuality, that he has brought Juvenalian satire to the England. While this idea is essentially false, as one can witness from Skelton's identical claim previously quoted in this paper which precedes Hall's by more than three-quarters of a century, Hall did bring into publication the first work that sparked a great deal of interest in the sort of verse satire that was so popular in the next few years. At the same time, his claim and publication coincided with the diminution of the Wits as the predominant purveyors of satire.

Virgidemiarum, the First Three Bookes in 1597. At least some of Marston's satires were circulating in manuscript in the years before 1597, since Hall, for example, satirized *Pigmalion* in *Virgidemiarum*. It would then seem that Marston, Guilpin and Hall were writing and developing their particular style of verse satire simultaneously. These three writers, along with Thomas Middleton, represented the final stage in the development of pre-suppression satire—a style that was remarkable for its unfettered rage. Of this group, Marston's satires are the most vital: their manic verbosity has an infectious grip as opposed to Hall's puritanical pedantry and Guilpin's less volatile Donne-inspired creations. Concealed in all these texts are insights that reveal both the psychological disjunctions inherent in the late Elizabethan satyr persona, as well as hints as to why this type of persona is so closely associated with the pox metaphors.

The new generation of satirists more clearly identified with the violence and wildness of the satyr persona than Lodge or Donne. Hall, Guilpin, Marston and Middleton embraced the harsh nature of their satyrs and reveled in repeated descriptions of scourging, purging, whipping, bleeding, cutting, and anatomizing of vice. This medical-centered style lent itself to pocky writing and interpretations. For these younger satirists, vice was a blatant infection of individuals and the state, and the pox—a symbol of this corruption—would be identified, exploited and perhaps even corrected by their satyrs' invective. In other words, the verse satirists believed vice and behavioral errors could be rectified by both medical treatment and the penitential, purging power of pain. This concept of poxy punishment as a painful spiritual cure had been around for at least the last half century. In 1550, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's chaplain, Thomas Becon, argued that the pains suffered by those "greaved wyth bone ache" and "eaten wyth canckars" suffered pains in

> thys worlde [that] are greate and bitter (I confesse) but
> they have an ende, and worcke healthe to the soule.

> And in lyke maner: the paynes that are sustayned in hell, are boeth greate and bitter also, but they have no ende, and bryng eternall damnation to the soule.[53]

This cleansing power of poxy pain was a common sentiment throughout the Tudor period—illness and humiliation were believed to foster holy virtues like humility and patience. The new generation of satirists had a hitherto unequalled predilection for painful, poxy literary cures. They expressly attempted to cure vice, not only through traditional rough, rude, plain language, but through the application of pain in a simulacrum of medico-corporeal punishment and anatomization—a virtual enactment of the identification, exposure and removal of humorally-induced vice. Rather than Becon's idea that poxy suffering, which also expressed through Dalila's trials in *Nice Wanton*, could bring salvation, the verse satirists preferred to write about the pox as a blazon for sin, corruption and hypocrisy. In this context, syphilis continued to grow in importance as a physical analogue to ideological, social, religious and political corruption.

Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* was the first volume published in this final spate of sixteenth-century verse satire. Hall's collection of satires was the stylistic bridge between Lodge and Donne's satires and those of Middleton, Marston and Guilpin. Hall's writing is by-and-large much more violent and critical than that of Donne or Lodge due to his interest in developing the Juvenalian style which Middleton, Marston and Guilpin also ardently embraced. However, Hall did not create the intensely pockified images of his contemporaries nor did he exhibit their overt sexual conflicts. In fact, the overwhelming genius of *Virgidemiarum*, especially in the first satires, is that of literary criticism. Hall's attacks on other poets constitute a form of literary criticism, albeit a harsh one in which ideological and aesthetic concerns were

[53] Thomas Becon, *The Jewel of Joye* (London: 1550), E4^{r}- E4^{v}, EEBO, internet, 10 August, 2004.

translated into personal attacks. When Hall did employ pockified imagery, he worked in reverse order when compared to most other satirists. He began with a general image of pockified texts—of writers who polluted with their amorous writings, and then worked back to individuals who were physically poxed and polluted.

It is only in *Virgidemiarum's* fourth satire that Hall created an extended pox metaphor in his tirade against the inconstancy of women. Hall's satyr attacked an adulteress with rage and disgust. He described her in a manner that evoked the Whore of Babylon—a commonly used image for predatory women that infect men with the pox (see Fig. 8).[54] She is marked by her sin: "Besmeared all with loathsome smoke of lust/ Like *Acherons* steemes, or smoldring sulphur dust."[55] She is death with an attractive face, as she creeps out of her home for an assignation, "groping the postern with her bared feet" after "crauling from her husbands luke warme bed,/ her carrion skin be daub'd with odors sweet."[56] Her rottenness is disguised with perfume. She hopes only for "long *Alchmænas* night/ Cursing the hasty dawning of the light,/ And with her cruell Ladie-starre uprose/ Shee seekes her third roust on her silent toes."[57] Her promiscuity is contained only by a night not long enough to conceal her sins.

Hall's recurrent use of scent as a signifier of corruption is an amalgamation of late medieval and early modern conceptions of both sin and syphilis. Margaret Healy attributed the rotten scent of syphilis to both the disease and its treatment: "sweating treatments [...] could lead to brain and lung disease, 'stinking breaths,' and even death;" as a result, she concluded that "disfigurement, disability, and the much dwelt-on bad smells were the companions of the cures [...] as well as the disease."[58] As

[54] For a discussion on the application of syphilis imagery to the Whore of Babylon in Shakespeare's *Henry V* and Thomas Dekker's *Whore of Babylon,* see, Harris, 64-75.
[55] Hall, C2^{r}.
[56] Hall, C2^{r}.
[57] Hall, C2^{r}.
[58] Healy, *Fictions*, 129.

Healy pointed out, syphilis and its treatment were thought to create a stench; furthermore, these scents would have been associated with physical corruption. The connection between rottenness, pox, and odor is a common device: "early modern pox was especially linked with unpleasant odors [...] Unsavory odors were suggestive, then, of sexual transgressions and moral contamination, as well as physical disease."[59] In Hall's adulteress there is also the scent of moral corruption, which is illustrated by repetitious promiscuity that dominates the image.

It is easy to imagine the close adulteress, not as an individual, but as the somewhat contradictory embodiment of death and sexual appetite. As such, she is a summation of several pockified images that have been created by the Wits and verse satirists. As in the earliest pocky criticisms the adulteress is marked by her sin, "besmeared all with... lust," and like a female counterpart to Lodge's Diffilus, she is an expert in dissimulation; she is a hypocrite who spends her days sitting and "simpring in her mew/ Like some chast dame, or shrined saynct in shew."[60] Hall has added a further layer of associations to this image, by summoning the biblical image of hypocrisy and death in the Gospel of Matthew: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (*The King James Version,* Matthew, 23.27). Diffilus is certainly an image of poxy hypocrisy, but Hall's close adulteress, with her painted outside and poisoned inside proves to be a far more resonant image because, unlike Lodge's creation, she is a *femme fatale* combining attraction and danger, sex and death.

Hall's adulteress would prove popular: Marston repeated the image when he created Lesbia, who has "stinking lunges, although a simpring grace,/ A muddy

[59] Healy, *Fictions,* 37.
[60] Hall, $C2^{r}$-$C2^{v}$.

inside, though a surphuled face."[61] The stink of Lesbia's lungs and her muddy insides correspond with the adulteress' hidden sin and poxed interior which are concealed behind perfume and paint. Middleton also created a composite image of the adulteress in *Micro-cynicon,* written while he was a student at Oxford. Insolent Superbia is yet another of the painted women that the satirists abhorred. Middleton wrote that it was the destiny of her "Fair-painted" kind to:

> Fall eternally
> Into Cimmerian black obscurity;
> Ill-favor'd idols, prides anatomy,
> Foul colour'd puppets, balls of infamy."[62]

Middleton, like Hall, immediately created an opposition between the desirable and undesirable. Like Hall's sweet smelling carrion adulteress, Superbia is fair-painted but destined to be black. In yet another Whore-of-Babylon image, Superbia is represented as an idol and puppet and as such is not only a diseased and dangerous embodiment of death and female sexual appetite but heretical and idolatrous as well.

In these images by Hall, Marston and Middleton, syphilis is the embodiment of lecherous sin. As a result, Superbia, like her counterparts the close adulteress and Lesbia, is also poxed:

> For what more happy creature to the eye
> Than is Superbia in her bravery?
> Yet who more foul, disrobéd of her attire?
> Pearl'd with the botch as children burnt with fire."[63]

Beneath the makeup, Superbia is covered with "the botch," or pox sores, which Middleton's satyr finds similar to, and as disturbing as, children covered in scar tissue. When her makeup is removed, in the place of her flashy adornments are the pearls, or white-headed syphilitic skin eruptions (see Fig. 9). Despite this gruesome

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[61] Marston *Scourge,* B6^{v}.
[62] Thomas Middleton, *Micro-Cynicon* in *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, vol. 8, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1886), 130-131.
[63] Middleton, 123-124.

affliction, Superbia's interior is even more horrifying than her pocky painted skin: "That for their outward cloack upon the skin,/ Worser enormities abound within."[64] Middleton's satire revealed a misogynistic fear of female interiority in which pox and sin—though terrifying on the outside—threaten to be far worse inside.

While Marston and Middleton hinted at the dangers that pockified, predatory women held for male readers, Hall completed his image with a portrayal of the dangers of promiscuous women by describing an act of infection. The adulteress burns her lover on her "third roust":

> While shee lies wallowing with a westy hed
> And palish carkasse, on his Brothel-bed,
> Till his salt bowels boyle with poysonous fire,
> Right *Hercules* with his second *Deianïre*.[65]

Hall used the mythic allusion of the apotheosis of Hercules to create a euphemism to describe pox infection. Hall's brothel-bed lover is mockingly alluded to as a second Hercules as the satirist juxtaposes Deianïre's burning gift with the adulteress' gift of the pox. [66]

Verse satire's poxy images of corruption came to flower in the works published after *Virgidemiarum*: Marston's *Pigmalion* and *Scourge* (1598); Guilpin's *Skialetheia* (1598), and Middleton's *Micro-Cynicon* (1599). These works are markedly more violent and aggressive than previous satires. With a style that might be described as rabid, Marston opens *Scourge* with a venomous blast in which his intention of "anatomizing" vice are clear as he promises to "up… plow / the hidden

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[64] Middleton, 124.
[65] Hall, C2^{v}.
[66] Deianïre gave Hercules a gift of a coat that had been smeared with centaur's blood. She had been duped into thinking that the blood would rekindle the love that she believed she had lost from him. Instead, the blood served another purpose, and acting like a poison, it burned Hercules' flesh. Hercules was too strong to be killed by the poison, but he was in unendurable pain from which there was no earthly respite. His father, Zeus, finally took pity upon him and freed him from his suffering by making him a god.

entrails of ranke villanie."[67] He created a pocky setting for exposing vice by approaching his task in a medico-anatomical sense. Marston envisioned the world as a corrupt organism:

> Shall law, nature, vertue, be rejected,
> Shall these world Arteries be... infected,
> With corrupt blood?[68]

In typical satyr fashion, he set out to "physic" the world by bleeding it of its bad blood: "Infectious blood, yee gouty humors quake/ Whilst my sharp Razor doth incision make."[69] A few lines later, Marston wrote of purging or balancing humors through his poetry: "O what dry braine melts not sharp mustard rime/ To purge the snottery of our slimie time?" This medico-anatomical tone exemplifies both the pockified nature and intense virulence of satirical works that characterize Marston's work and those of his fellow satirists at the close of the sixteenth century.

Rage and fascination with corruption and disease spill over and color the whole collection of Marston' satires. Like the other verse satirists, Marston (or Marston's persona at least) seems to have a fixation with the worldly coupled with a vocal disgust for sin. This disjunction between his love of and disgust for the world dominates Marston's satires. His particular psychological conflict seemed to have had its basis in an intense guilt complex associated with sex and sexuality, or as Cliff Forshaw has written of Marston's satyr persona: the motivation for satire was "born out of envy," and "railing and bodily alienation" were "based on lack of sexual success."[70] Perhaps the most revealing insights concerning this disjunction can be garnered from *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image and Certayne Satyres.* This erotic poem, which Moulton described as encapsulating "those aspects of early

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[67] Marston, *Scourge*, B4^{v}.
[68] Marston, *Scourge*, C7^{v}.
[69] Marston, *Scourge*, E3^{r}, C^{r}.
[70] Cliff Forshaw, "The Body in Marston's Satires," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (London: Ashgate, 2000), 174.

modern erotic writing that seem most pornographic," seems to be a practice in self indulgent eroticism which is reminiscent of Nashe's *Choise of Valentines*.[71] Marston attempted to titillate the reader and perhaps, himself, but he ostensibly claimed that *Pigmalion* was written to entice and trap dissolute lechers into reading the satires that he published with the poem.

In "Satyre I," only pages after "Pigmalion," Marston's satyr set out to scourge the lechery of an ex-soldier called the great Tubrio as a monumental example of lust-driven folly. The satyr says:

> Not long since I did view,
> The man betake him to a common stew
> And there (I was) like no quaint stoamck't man
> Eates up his armes. And warres munition
> His wauling plume, falls in the Brokers chest [...]
> But, now that dids't mark Spanish Pike,
> Come with French-pox out of the brothell dore.[72]

Tubrio consumes himself through his lust: he learns too late and to his detriment that even a brave soldier is "no match for the withering power of female desire."[73] Images of rampant women are conflated with syphilis and cannibalism in order to illustrate the idea of women who "suck up men's strength" and men who destroy themselves through their unhinged desires.[74] Later, Marston's satyr will remark that "Diomedes jades were not so bestiall/ As this same-seeming faint, vile cannibal."[75] Cannibalization, or self-cannibalization—of devouring oneself, or another—in the consummation of rampant desire, is a central theme of Marston's satires. When Tubrio actually devours his arms as well as his ammunition, Marston reveals a fear

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[71] Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22. That it may be assumed that this type of verse was generally suggested by early modern readers as self-indulgent is supported by the popular name for *Choise*: Nashe's dildo. By calling the piece a dildo is to say that the work was written to derive sexual pleasure, with connotations of derisive deviant or degenerate connotations.
[72] Marston, *Metamorphosis,* D2^{v}.
[73] Moulton, 77.
[74] Moulton, 77.
[75] Marston, *Metamorphosis,* D3^{r}.

that the sexual appetite can cause cannibalistic self-consumption. He has sold his weapons in order to pursue pleasure, and in effect, has un-armed himself, or made himself handicapped and not a whole man. The word play continues when he pawns his great martial plume: it ends in "the Brokers chest." The plume may represent Tubrio's masculinity, either in a general or a specifically priapic sense. The word play ends with Tubrio leaving the brothel without his weapon which provides the opportunity for a pike-penis-pox pun.[76] Tubrio, who once did "mark," or strike, against the Spaniard's pike in the manly pursuit of war is now marked with the characteristic buboes of the French pox. He has become a casualty of his own desire and has not only lost his martial weapon, but it is likely that he has lost his power of generation to pox-induced impotence—he is emasculated.[77] Tubrio is a martial man destroyed by lust; he enters the brothel a soldier and leaves with the French pox and little else.

Despite his excuses for writing *Pigmalion*, Marston's journey from risqué flights of amorous fancy in the erotic poem to the great Tubrio's pox infection in one volume would appear somewhat incongruous in tone. Marston seems to provide an example of the conflicted nature of the satyr that was first introduced in Donne's portrayal of the psychological fragmentation of his satyr and the humorist. In *Pigmalion*, Marston's satyr-persona, Kinsayder, exemplifies the dual-natured understanding of the satyr as explained by John Florio: there is no hint within "Pigmalion" that the work is anything but erotica despite Marston's rebuttal of Hall's

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[76] Tubrio's purchasing of the pox is an Elizabethan convention. R.W. McConchie points out that "the clientele of bawdy-houses were often described as buying diseases;" the example that he cites is Lucio's admission "I have bought more diseases under her roof as come to… three thousand dolor's a year" (*Measure for Measure,* 1.2.42-45). R.W. McConchie, "'Foul Sin Gathering Head:' V.D. in Shakespeare's *Henry the IV, Part II*," *Parergon* 32 (1982), 32.

[77] In *Scourge,* a similar character makes an appearance who, through a pox infection, has "wasted cleane away his martiall spright." This character has also lost his weapon, and in its place he carries "his transformed ponyhard, to a Syrrenge straw." Instead of a weapon, he is now armed with a syringe, most likely used for mercury injections. Marston, *Scourge*, F2^{r-v}.

(who is chastised as Curio in *Scourge*) attack, in which he claims: "Think'st thou, that I in melting poesie,/ Will pamper itching sesualitie?." Instead he asserts:

> Know I wrot
> Those idle rimes to note the odious spot
> And blemish that deformes the lineaments
> Of moderne Poesies habliments."[78]

Marston claimed to have written *Pigmalion* to expose to condemnation the type of amorous poetry that he found so baneful. While some satirists used sensual imagery to mock gulls that embraced painted, perfumed, powdered women, Kinsayder's evident delight in the erotic scenes seems be incongruous with his design.

Marston was not alone in this sort of disjunction; in *Micro-Cynicon*, nineteen-year-old Thomas Middleton's satyr discusses the state of a prostitute with a child:

> Old beldam hath a daughter or a son,
> True born or illegitimate all is one;
> Issue she hath. The father? Ask you me?[79]

Middleton's satyr is perhaps even more disconnected than Marston's. In this scene, he presents the striking, even obscene, objectification and commodification of an old mother and child.

Middleon's satyr focuses on the mysterious sire of beldam's child. As a measure of the corruption of the age, the satyr seems not to care or see a difference between a child born in or out of wedlock. The satyr has asked whether it is male or female, true born or illegitimate, without a care for the answer—the only thing that matters is that beldam has issue. The fact that the satyr cannot summon a single definite qualifier when describing the child, which quite possibly may be his own, indicates that he has separated his actions from the effect that they have on others. Even his name for the mother, "beldam" is a generalization: in early modern English beldam merely signifies a grandmother, or even a great-grandmother. The satyr uses

[78] Marston *Scourge,* E4^{v}.
[79] Middleton, 130-131.

this label to underscore the woman's unnatural sexual appetite by indicating that she should be beyond the urges of youth. The amorphous nature of the satyr's description may also serve to invite an archetypal or paradigmatic reading: if Middleton's satyr is feeling guilt and disjunction between his actions and ideals, the nameless courtesan and nameless and un-gendered child may invite readers to more easily relate his experience with their own.

As the vignette progresses, one begins to see how different Middleton's satyr is from the others. Whereas all satyrs struggle with condemning others' vices while pandering to their own, Middleton's satyr reveals his corrupt acquisitive/appetitive nature most clearly. He imagines beldam's body as a house:

> The house wide open stands, her lodging's free:
> Admit myself for recreation
> It argues not that I have been the man
> That first kept revels in that mantian;
> No, no, the haggling commonplace is old,
> The tenement hath oft been bought and sold:
> 'Tis rotten now, earth to earth, dust to dust
> Sodom's on fire, and consume it must.[80]

Furthermore, this house common: beldam's house/body stands open for visitors. The satyr, himself, freely admits that he has had intercourse with beldam in the euphemism that he admitted "himself for recreation." Despite his confession, he attempts to diminish his responsibility by saying he was not the first to revel in her mansion. Instead he says that she is an old and a common market (both the thing sold and the place where it is sold)—a "haggling commonplace" who has been purchased several times over. Beldam is a consumable with diminishing returns—buying, selling and using her body has taken its toll. Through continual and general use, Beldam has become poxed; a condition indicated by the satyr's description that her house/body is rotten and burning.

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[80] Middleton, 130-131.

Like Middleton, poxy corruption and destruction through unrestrained consumption is a dominant theme that Marston's satyr reiterates throughout *Pigmalion* and *Scourge*. The satyr seems to think that this consumption is destroying England, and he passionately argues that English strength has been subverted by creatures such as Tubrio.[81] The connection between pox and commerce originates in images of women who sell their bodies and the vicious economy that arises from the "relationship between poverty, prostitution, and 'infection.'"[82] Loose women are associated with prostitution, and promiscuity is associated with the pox. As a result, pox metaphors are often closely related to the trade in flesh and expanded to include other forms of illicit brokering. Marston's image of English martial strength consumed by vice, lust and pox is supported by Guilpin's image of Mark Antony depleted by sexual dissolution:

> In spight of valour martiall Antony,
> Doth sacrifice himselfe to lecherie:
> Wasting to skin and bones (true map of ruth).[83]

Guilpin's appropriation of Antony is not unusual: "classical myth and narrative, so popular in the period, were replete with stories of male figures conquered by an ungovernable female principle."[84] An analogue to Tubrio, Antony is the classical example of the martial man subjugated by a *femme fatale* and destroyed by vice. Antony's dereliction of his military career and his country, in a move to pursue Cleopatra, cost him both his reputation and his life. He sacrifices everything to his lust, which, in Guilpin's pocky image, consumes him. Shakespeare may have been thinking of Guilpin's word-picture, when he created a pocky Mark Antony of whom Caesar says:

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[81] For a description of fears of an emasculated "Italianated" England, see Moulton, 113-118.
[82] Healy, *Fictions,* 161.
[83] Guilpin, C3^{r}.
[84] Sawday, 221.

> Yet must Antony
> No way excuse his lightnesse. If he fill'd
> His vacancie with his Voluptuousnesse,
> Full surfets, and the drinesse of his bones,
> Call on him for't."[85]

Here, Octavius states that if Antony's dereliction of his duty has been filled with the pursuit of pleasure, the pox will be his punishment: the dryness in his bones refers to the pain inflicted upon a pox victim when the disease attacks and destroys bone. Caesar's pronouncement sound cruel, but Healy points out that this type of judgment was rather commonplace. Citing the Renaissance surgeon, William Clowes, Healy concludes that "such intemperate types, if afflicted with the Pox (as just deserts), were unworthy of the surgeon's assistance."[86] This dim view of the pursuit of pleasure is echoed by Marston and Guilpin. Their satyrs are stating that their countrymen have been destroyed by desire as they have succumbed to an economic environment of endless and excessive consumption, fuelled by flesh and foreign fashion—a process which has eroded the very essence of native English virtue, morality and strength.

The dissolution of English masculinity via the pursuit of sexual pleasure appears repeatedly in not only satire but also in other forms of poetry and on the stage. There are several influences for this belief, but it seems rooted in a masculine fear of the feminine sexual appetite. Women, like alcohol, both have the ability to exhaust the male sexual appetite. Macbeth's porter, referring alcohol, says of men: "It makes him and it mars him"; it "makes him stand to and not stand to."[87] Elizabethans equated masculinity with martial and generative ability; as a result, sex and alcohol both have the propensity to subvert masculinity. Since the pox can cause impotence and is associated, at some level, with unchaste sexuality, it becomes central to the image of English masculinity destroyed by lust. Tubrio, the martial Englishman, has

[85] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, (1.4.25-28)
[86] Healy, *Fictions*, 161.
[87] *Macbeth*, (2. 2.31, 33)

been ruined by his consumption in that he has permanently, in a physical and financial sense, been made impotent as a result of his intemperate desires. In a larger sense, male sexual dissolution through sex, pox or intemperate consumption of alcohol—or for that matter any act which subverted masculinity—was considered inherently dangerous. In examples such as Tubrio and Mark Antony, early modern writers presented the destruction of fighting men as a consequence of their pursuit of lust. Such behavior suggested that irresponsible and immoral sexual attitudes not only hindered England's fighting ability but endangered the commonwealth itself.

The pox comes to represent the corruption of not just lust and lechery but of consumption itself. When Marston's satyr turned his attentions to Tullus, he combines lust and greed in a pox metaphor:

> Thou often bragg'st
> That for a false French-crowne, thou vaulting hadst
> Though that thou know'st for thy incontinence
> Thy drab repayd thee, true French pestilence."[88]

Tullus paid his prostitute/mistress with counterfeit French crowns; however, the French crowns have reappeared as a metaphorical description of the characteristic ring of syphilitic buboes around the crown Tullus' head.[89] Thus Tullus' drab has repaid him with a real French crown for the false one that he has paid her.

In a similar sense, Luxurio's pocky lechery is likened to commerce and particularly publishing:

> He that hath the sole monopolie
> By patent, of the Surburbe lecherie.
> No new edition of drabs comes out,
> But seene and allow'd by *Luxurios* snout."[90]

Again the mercantile language of the printing house is used to describe Luxurio's lust. He has a patented monopoly on the bawdy houses of the suburbs in which he

[88] Marston, *Scourge,* C6[r].
[89] See 156, 176.
[90] Marston, *Scourge,* H6[v].

examines all the new prostitutes first. In another pox-as-commodity attack, Marston's satyr turns his attention to the "worthless puffie slave" who is an English traveler who is an aficionado of foreign goods and habits:"

> What art thou but black clothes? Say Brutus say
> Art thou anything but onley sad array?
> Which I am sure is all thou brought back'st from France,
> Save Naples Poxe, and French mens dalliance.[91]

Marston's puffy slave is an analogue of, and perhaps even the inspiration for, Ben Jonson's lumpish whoremaster of *Bartholomew Fair*. This corpulent individual is a slave to his desires. He is poxed and obese—a victim of both his lust and gluttony. He has brought back to England not culture and fashion but vice and syphilis. As the tableau unfolds, it seems that the puffy slave has brought back some semblance of continental culture; however, it is the sort of which the satyr thoroughly disapproves. The puffy slave has brought back the black clothes and presumably the melancholy manner of a French malcontent, but he has also learned about deviant foreign sexual practices. Marston's satyr asks him of his entertainments while abroad:

> Did'st thou to Venus goe oft els to have?
> Did'st thou buy a Lute and use a Currezan?
> And there live like a Cylenian?
> And now fro thence what what hether do'st thou bring?
> But surpheulings, new paints and poisonings?
> Aretines pictures, some strange Luxury?
> And new found use of Venis venery?[92]

The satyr also knows what he has brought back to England: disease, deceit, and decadence. He brings paints or makeup to conceal his age and state of health, and the poisonings might refer to either vice, disease, medicine or actual poisons that he has gathered abroad.[93] Forbidden knowledge is also part of the infection; as a result,

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[91] Marston, *Scourge,* D4^{v}.
[92] Marston, *Scourge,* D4^{v}.
[93] Ironically and probably unintentionally Marston and his colleagues are right: cosmetics were often lead-based and as a result, poisonous, though it is unlikely that the satirists were aware of this.

Pietro Aretino is once again invoked as the archetypal purveyor of decadent and dangerous intelligence. Knowledge of Aretino is tantamount to a dangerous understanding of and, by implication a predilection for, lechery as in the similar case of Luxurio:

> Did ever any man ere heare him talke
> But of Pick-hatch, or some Shorditch baulke,
> Arentines filth, or of his wandring whore…
> Of Ruscus nasty lothsome brothell rime,
> That stinks like Ajax froth, or muck-pit slime.[94]

Arentino's filth and Ruscus' brothel rhymes feed Luxurio's lust. In a similar sense, forbidden images feed the puffy slave's desires, just as Aretino and Ruscus' illicit works further contribute to Luxurio's unhealthy, self-consuming appetites, until: "His eyes, his tongue, his soule, his all is lust."[95] Marston suggests that sexual knowledge is dirty, diseased and corrupt by associating it and erotic verse with excremental images of the muck pit and the toilet in the well used Ajax as a jakes pun.[96] For such characters, there seems to be no hope for redemption, and Kinsayder goes so far as to say that syphilitic vice can eat away a person's soul:

> Infeebling ryot, all vices confluence,
> Hath eaten out that sacred influence,
> Which made him man.
> That divine part is soak'd away in sinne,
> In sensuall lust, and midnight bezeling.
> Ranke inundation of luxuriousnes,
> Have tainted him with such grosse beastilines,
> That now the seat of that celestiall essence,
> Is all possest with Naples pestilence.[97]

Marston has made the pox-as-sin image of the early sixteenth century an aggressive, acquisitive moral infection. The poxy cankers of sin that John Fisher imagined almost a century before, which could be cleansed by penitence and prayer, have for

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[94] Marston *Scourge,* H7[r].
[95] Marston, *Scourge,* H7[v].
[96] Marston is employing common Elizabethan word-play when he writes Ajax to refer to "a jakes," a slang term for a toilet.
[97] Marston, *Scourge,* F2[v].

Kinsayder, like a cancer, grown out of control. Vice has devoured the puffy slave's soul: there is no return. In a parody of soul-cleansing grace, his soul has been washed away by sin. The place where his soul was is now inhabited by the pox: the divine part of man is eaten away by a loathsome disease

Conclusion

To Marston and his peers, London is a nexus of excessive consumption that is taboo, diseased and rampant. The whole epoch is pockified; it is a "sinne leapered age."[98] In this disordered environment any means are justified if they serve the end of sating a desire; as a result, a tide of evil runs across a landscape dominated by "Mountebanks and banditti" and characterized by drunkenness, decadent food, venery and deviance; a landscape where even the dreaded pox has become repulsive only to the satyr.[99] In this corrupt space, the pox serves as the moral punctuation of many of the satirists' tales:

> The noble motivated by greed and lust forgets his moral responsibilities, begs monopolies, dresses fantastically, leaves his lands to ruin, pursues common wenches, mistreats wards, and gets the pox. The squire puts all his lands on his back, goes to London, brags of amours with every lady in court, flatters the great outrageously, allows his estate to go to ruin, gets the pox. The soldier returns from the wars, brags, lies about travels, pretends to a fashionable melancholy, dices, wenches, is continually drunk, bullies the weak, gets the pox. The merchant puts money out at exorbitant rates, is cuckolded by a fop, starves his servants, cheats his friends, is miserly, while his son at one of the Inns of Court spends his income riotously and gets the pox.[100]

In his study on satire, Kernan noticed this pocky phenomenon in the verse satirists' texts. In outlining these paradigms he included both corrupt or foolish financial

[98] Guilpin, C2^{v}.
[99] Marston, *Scourge,* C5^{r}-C6^{v}.
[100] Kernan, 85.

transactions and pox in every example. He also believed that all satirical characters are stock figures, which represent "various manifestations of a boundless desire for self-gratification that escaped the restraints hitherto placed on it by tradition and common sense."[1] It is likely that the gratification that Kernan identified was actually part of a larger, socio-economic whole, and these unfettered appetites were the result of a rapidly changing social milieu.

Kernan believed that no satiric author before Ben Jonson recognized that the characters they created were representations of unbounded appetites.[2] It seems likely that this was not a personal revelation by Jonson, but rather a broad realization by several authors influenced by life in the burgeoning, capitalist city which London was rapidly becoming. Even though Kernan does not draw this conclusion, his paradigms say as much: each example of a corrupt transaction is foolish, wasteful, spendthrift or immorally acquisitive, and all are viewed as damaging to the commonwealth. Satirists like Marston see a world in which "lust has confounded all," and this world leads to death: "a die, a drab and filthy broking knaves, are all the worlds wide mouths, all devouring graves."[3] Marston saw a world of open mouths, and it seems that he has concluded that they represent a promise, that in buying into an appetitive or consumeristic lifestyle, one is also buying into sin and death.

Marston's sensual and appetitive characters often succumb to a syphilitic death, but before doing so, they either corrupt or devour their minds and souls:

> The bright glosse of our intellectuall
> Is foully soyl'd. The wanton wallowing
> In fond delights, and amorous dallying,
> Hath dusk'd the fairest splendour of our soule:
> Nothing now left, but carkas, lothsome, foule."[4]

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[1] Kernan, 87.
[2] Kernan, 87.
[3] Marston, *Scourge,* G3^{r}, C4^{r}.
[4] Marston, *Scourge,* G3^{r}.

Marston saw the mind soiled and the soul blackened through the illicit and unprincipled pursuit of pleasure. For the satirists, London was a place out of control and in the grips of unrestrained capitalism. The satirists' rage and fear was directed toward their fellow Londoners and their decadent and deviant appetites. Within the satires, the idea of consumption and corruption is omnipresent, and the pox becomes the paradigmatical image in this theme of deviant and excessive appetite.

While most often employed in the description of lechers and lust, the pox metaphor becomes common linguistic currency for several acts of corrupt consumption. By this I mean that syphilis is, to the satirists of the late Elizabethan period, not a specific contagion but a disease of appetite in general. Excessive appetites do not lead to corruption; they are corruption. Physical, financial, intellectual or moral corruption is described in pox-inspired language. The satirists' world view encompassed an environment in which vices intermingled and fed upon each other; as a result, they created a London that reflected this world-vision, dominated by drunkenness, lust, gluttony, and avarice and unified by pox metaphors.

Chapter 6

Shakespeare's Pockified Plays

Misanthropy and the Translation of Satire from Print to Stage

> We are all diseased,
> And our surfeiting and wanton hours
> Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,
> And we must bleed for it.
> (*2 Henry IV*, 4.1.54-57)

In Shakespeare's plays—particularly those written in the early years of the seventeenth century—the pox metaphor reached its broadest and most complete form. In a tribute to the breadth of Shakespeare's pox metaphors Frankie Rubinstein compiled an overview of some his terms for syphilis:

> French, sometimes Neapolitan, pox and pocky, the bone-ache, scald, and serpigo; the double meanings in baldness, boils and boiled stuff, charged chambers, hollow bones, the itch, a downed nose, rotten(ness), surgeon and surgery; and the puns on moldy (venereally diseased), plague and mercury (venereal disease and its remedy), sauce/saucy (the clap or pox; semen, lasciviousness), the scab (skin disease: specifically, itch and syphilis).[1]

Shakespeare not only took advantage of the Wits' and verse satirists' creative approach to the pox metaphor, he further contributed to the proliferation of the metaphor. The Wits and the verse satirists had used syphilis to describe the corrosive action of many influences within early modern society. Earlier in his career, Shakespeare followed this trend and used the pox largely as a satirical tool; however, in his mature plays, the disease

[1] Frankie Rubinstein, "They were not such Good Years," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.1 (1989), 71.

becomes a central means of expressing early modern dissatisfaction with the changing economic and moral value system. In *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*, the pox not only has the power to describe, but it also becomes the means by which the playwright and his characters inscribe, or comment upon, themes of evaluation and consumption with an established topoi which associates syphilis images with sin, corrosion, degeneracy and ungoverned appetite.

Elizabethan writers' interest in syphilis as a describer of hypocritical, dissimulating, appetitive corruption was succinctly voiced by Thomas Nashe as early as 1591 in Pierce Penniless' description of London denizens:

> I warrant we have old hucksters in this great Grandmother of Corporations, Madame *Troynovant* that have not backbited any of their neighbors with the tooth of envy this twentie yeare, in the wrinckles of whose face ye may hide false dice, and play at cherry-pit in the dint of their cheeks: yet these aged mothers of iniquitie will have their deformities newe plaistred over, and weare nosegays of yellow hair on their furies foreheads, when age hath written, Hoe God, be here, on their bald burnt parchment pates. Pish, pish, what talke you of old age or bald pates? Men and women have that have gone under the South pole, must lay off their furde night-caps in spight of their teeth, and become yeomen o the Vinegar bottle: a close periwig hides all the sinnes of an olde whore-master; but *Cucullus non facit Monachum:* tis not their newe bonnets will keep them from the old boan-ach. Ware when a mans sins are written on his ey-browes, and that not a hair bredth betwixt them and the falling sicknes.[2]

Nashe's diatribe was directed against painted, plastered hypocrites, whose bald pates were not the result of old age, but of excessive consumption which has manifested itself as a pox infection. Nashe reinforced this first pox reference by warning his readers of

[2] Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Divell,* from *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol.1, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 181-182.

men whose syphilitic shin pain was revealed by their lack of eyebrows—the result of pox-induced alopecia.[3]

One of the more interesting aspects of Nashe's pronouncement against London is his equation of the city, which he described as Madame Troynovant, the "great grandmother of corporations," and the pox. According to the *OED* the meaning of corporation as "belonging to a body politic, or corporation, or to a body of persons" was first used in *Timon of Athens*.[4] Nashe's passage is a substantially earlier example of this most modern usage of the term.[5] Nashe envisaged London as a corporate or joint business entity, which was corrupt, hypocritical and deceptive. Much in keeping with his image, Lawrence Manley described early modern London herself as "a parasitic consumer within the neofeudal absolutist state."[6] While Manley's adjective "parasitic" is meant by-and-large to describe the disproportionate consumerism of London in comparison to the rest of the kingdom, the image invites readings of corruption. Furthermore, Manley posited that reactions to the commercialization of London begin to be registered as early as the first half of the sixteenth century in the Tudor complaint genre in which London "was often a major target [...] sometimes for directly causing

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[3] The falling sickness is now commonly associated with epilepsy; however, early moderns at least semantically confused pox and epilepsy. According to the Betts, Shakespeare also confused the falling sickness or epilepsy with the pox, see T. Betts and H. Betts, "A Note on a Phrase in Shakespeare's Play *King Lear*: 'A Plague upon your Epileptic Visage," *Seizure* 7.5 (1988), 407-409.

[4] I will discuss the corporate connection of *Timon of Athens* in greater detail further into this chapter.

[5] Ian Archer has discussed the emerging corporate identity of London in the 1590s that evolved from the livery companies, which he argues:

> Were central to the organization of business life, providing a framework within which the conditions of employment could be regulated, standards of production maintained, and legislation for the benefit of the craft promoted. The bonds between members were reinforced by conviviality fostered in a rich cycle of feasting, by the charity provided by the companies, and by the availability of a framework within which disputes could be reconciled. Membership of a company was therefore a crucial component of a citizen's identity.

Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 100.

[6] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 71.

England's ills, sometimes for its association with ruthlessly anti-social and amoral commerce."[7] The old, poxed corporate members of Pierce's describes represent a Nashean image of the ruthless, hypocritical and corrupt acquisitive nature of London and her citizens.

In *Pierce,* Nashe's castigation of London's rampant, amoral commerce quickly becomes pockified. The "aged mothers of iniquitie" who are the members of this corporation join together in their attempts to hide what at first appears to be old age; however, it quickly becomes apparent that they are actually suffering from their pockified sins. It is important to note also that Nashe's subjects of scorn seem to be men. London is called a "grandmother," and her citizens were described as "mothers," but when he illustrated particular examples, he used masculine signifiers such as a "whore-master" and "a mans ey-browes." In *Pierce,* pox was certainly equated with hypocrisy: the wig of the old, bald city gentleman was transformed into the close or secret periwig that conceals the sins and alopecia of an old whoremaster. Despite any dissimulation, the pox remained a clear mark of sin, written on man's face and punctuated by his missing eyebrows. Even if they can disguise their disease from others, the sufferers are unable to hide from the poxy pain of the bone ache. In this passage, Nashe introduced what would later become Shakespeare's dominant pox interest. For Shakespeare, the pox paradoxically emblazoned characters, like Pandarus, with the disapprobation of hidden sin, in a way similar to Nashe's disapproval of corrupt London citizens. More importantly, however, Nashe's pockified Troynovant has a distinctly evaluative and appetitive feel as a place of excessive consumption and corrupt exchange, which was exemplified by dissimulation, hypocrisy and poxy infection.

[7] Manley, 75.

Shakespeare seized upon Nashe's pockified precepts and explored them in depth. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Pandarus' immorality is inexorably linked to his position as sexual merchant, but by *Timon of Athens,* Shakespeare abandoned the overtly sexual nature of his previous syphilis metaphors to pockify the other great appetite of mankind: the love of gold. According to Susan Sontag, in the Elizabethan age, "particular diseases figure as examples of disease in general: no disease has its own distinctive logic."[8] The pox is the exception to Sontag's rule. Syphilis does have its own economic and medico-literary logic—one which by the late Elizabethan age is intrinsically linked to consumption, corruption and acquisition. While Sontag explored the great disease metaphors of the late twentieth century—cancer and AIDS—she missed that the pox has its own specific identity based on its multivalent ills; its association with sex; the embodiment of the dangers of appetitive desire and the conflation of consumption with corruption.

For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the pox was both general: poxy ravages were applied to a variety of subjects often describing what Sontag identified as "concern for the social order" and specific: discussions and images concerning the pox almost categorically focused on the application of syphilitic ravages to describe the dangers of various consumptive acts.[9] Sontag makes the argument that "traditional metaphors are principally a way of being vehement; they are, compared with modern metaphors, relatively contentless."[10] Many of the Wits and all of the verse satirists' pox metaphors are vehement but they are hardly contentless. Furthermore, by the time Shakespeare had

[8] Susan Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 73.
[9] Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," 73.
[10] Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," 73.

finished working with syphilis, the pox metaphor had not only its own logic, but it had attained a distinctive literary existence linked to themes of evaluation and consumption in a way which was far removed from the biological incidence of the disease.

Shakespeare's appropriation of the pox metaphor began early in his career. Pox references appeared in the Sonnets and the earliest of his comedies; however, his treatment of the metaphor was metamorphosed in the last years of the sixteenth century. This change can be viewed in an examination of the treatment of Falstaff and the pox from *The First Part of Henry IV* to *Henry V.* Much of Shakespeare's adaptation of the syphilis metaphor can be attributed to the influence of verse satire. When Shakespeare was writing *1 Henry IV,* none of the Juvenalian verse satires had been published. By the time Shakespeare was writing *Henry V* in 1599, all the major satires by Hall, Marston, Guilpin and Middleton were in print. Their violent, pockifed diatribes against various forms of London corruption invariably flavor Shakespeare's changing representation of Falstaff and his use of the pox.

Also during the course of the *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays, Ben Jonson staged the first adaptation of verse satire, *Every Man Out of His Humor,* at the Globe. In *Every Man Out,* Jonson presented the audience with Macilente, a misanthropic character who is heavily influenced by verse satire, and possibly based on the verse satirists themselves.[11] At approximately the same time, Shakespeare created Jacques: the Elizabethan stage's first pockified misanthropic character. In *As You Like It,* Shakespeare's equation of verse satire, misanthropy and the pox yields an understanding that these cynical critics of social

[11] Jonson may have been satirizing Marston in the character of Macilente. Jonson and Marston had a tumultuous relationship. They must have gotten on at times, since they worked together, such as on *Eastward Hoe,* their collaboration with Chapman, but Jonson "had many quarrels with Marston;" satirized him as Crispinus in *Poetaster,* and as he triumphantly crowed to William Drummond on two different occasions, he "beat him, and took his pistol from him." Drummond, 17, 26.

behavior were also some of the society's most culpable members. The pox finds expression on the late Elizabethan and Jacobean stage through two major conduits. The first and earliest is the dramatic celebration of carnivalesque satire borrowed from the likes of Rabelais, Greene and Nashe. Shakespeare's early examples of poxy satire, represented by works such as *The Comedy of Errors* and *1 Henry IV*, celebrate a satire of grotesque earthiness that embraces the pox with humor—by laughing at vice as a bawdy danger. There is little space for the misanthrope in carnivalesque satire. For Shakespeare at least, the carnivalesque element of pox satire gives way to the second form—that of bitter, biting satire—beginning in *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*, when the tragic implications of syphilis are brought home. In the Henry plays, one can trace the progression from the earlier celebration of low humor and earthy exuberance toward a darker, Juvenalian world in which syphilis has killed Falstaff and forced Doll into the hospital.

Carnivalesque Satire: Falstaff's Pox Jests

In the Henry IV plays, Shakespeare borrowed from two diverse pockified traditions, both of which would have been familiar to the Wits—carnivalesque satire and the prodigal son plays.[12] While Hal plays the prodigal son, the grotesque body and antics of Falstaff dominate the plays, and through him, Shakespeare dramatizes "the fashion for pungent verbal display which pamphlets and satires had already introduced."[13] Falstaff himself has been described as a stage representation of a satirist, and in this sense, he,

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[12] The prodigal son plays are a morality play subgenre. Often referred to as the "'Christian Terrence' plays," they were originally the creation of "sixteenth-century Dutch and German schoolmasters who saw the opportunity to sugar-coat moral precept and instruction in Latin style with the liveliness of cautionary tale." Sheldon P. Zitner, introduction, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* by Francis Beaumont, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 17. For a longer discussion on this topic see, Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
[13] Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 101.

like Jacques, anticipated the influences that motivated Jonson's translation of verse satire in *Every Man Out.*[14] The exchanges between Falstaff, Hal and others in the play represent: "the culmination of the developing taste for the low style we find in Aretino, in the Marprelate controversy, in Donne's satires and, of course, in the Nashe-Harvey quarrel."[15] Along with catering to the satirical appetite of the audience, Shakespeare introduced the pox as an important theme for the first time in the Henry IV plays.

Pox references had occasionally peppered early Tudor dramatic dialogue in the morality plays of the early and mid sixteenth century that condemned lust.[16] From his earliest period, Shakespeare had an interest in pox metaphors. He alluded to syphilis in what may well have been his first play, *The Comedy of Errors,* when Dromio of Syracuse described Luce's body in geographical terms.[17] Dromio's "mock-blazon" of Luce locates "'America, the Indies' in her nose" and imbues it "with recognized pox tokens, a formidable crop of rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain" (*Comedy of Errors,* 3.2.136-139).[18] While Dromio's poxy mock emblazoning of Luce's body with geographical aspects is but a brief mention, it is a hint of Shakespeare's future interest in the commodification of flesh and his conflation of the

[14] Herbert and Judith Weil describe Falstaff as "companion, father-figure, satirist and thief" in Herbert and Judith Weil's introduction to William Shakespeare's *The First Part of Henry IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28-29.
[15] Rhodes, *Grotesque,* 101.
[16] See 125-128.
[17] Most scholars suggest that *The Comedy of Errors* was written between 1591 and 1594 with some conjecturing that it was penned as early as 1587. Despite the uncertain earlier dates, we know that it was performed for the Inns of Court law revels, at Gray's Inn on December 28th, 1594. As such, *The Comedy of Error's* pox metaphors and its Inns of Court connection may reinforce the possibility that the Inns nurtured the development of the pox metaphor not only for the verse satirists but also for dramatists. Shakespeare's extremely pockified plays, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens* are also said to have Inns of Court connections.
[18] Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare, Sex and the Print Revolution* (London: Athlone, 1996), 137-138.

pox with sexual and monetary appetites.[19] If in his earliest works, Shakespeare equated the pox with flesh, commodification and wealth, Douglas Bruster has suggested that as early as *King John,* he also recognized the unsettling effect of commodification on society.[20] Shakespeare continued to develop the theme during the period in which he was writing the Henry IV and V plays. In *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1597), René Girard remarked on the commodification of Venetian society:

> Human flesh and money in Venice are constantly exchanged for one another. People are turned into objects of financial speculation. Mankind has become a commodity, an exchange value like any other. I cannot believe that Shakespeare did not perceive the analogy between Gratiano's wager and Shylock's pound of flesh.[21]

Shakespeare dramatized the human propensity for people to commodify their neighbors through the image of human butchery in which flesh was to be exacted as a payment—this very same image and theme appeared in *Timon of Athens* when Timon offered his blood as a payment for his debts. However, it seems that Shakespeare's more involved carnivalesque dramatic pox references were largely confined to *The Comedy of Errors* and the Henry IV plays.[22] From *2 Henry IV,* the pox metaphor takes on a more sinister tone as the audience's predilection for satire veers away from the carnivalesque elements of prose satire and toward the grinding harshness and melancholic cynicism of verse satire.

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[19] Troilus will see Cressida as a similar prize "Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl" pursued by himself as "the merchant, and this sailing Pandar/ Our doubtful hope, our convoy and our bark" (*Troilus and Cressida,* 1.1.97, 100-101). Of course in this instance, it is the broker rather than the subject that is poxed.
[20] See Bruster's commentary on commodity as "the bias of the world" (*King John* 2.1.574). Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 104-105.
[21] René Girard, *A Theater of Envy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 245.
[22] Several early plays have minor pox references, such as poxy curses, including *Loves Labors Lost, Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

This is not to say that Shakespeare did not appreciate the macabre side of pox images in his earlier works. Pre-misanthropic, melancholic pox references figure largely in his poetry that was written in the 1590s and addressed to an aristocratic, private audience. This readership was the same Inns of Court audience that served as a crucible for verse satire. In Shakespeare's poetry, darker images of the pox are equated with consumption, like the early metaphors developed by the Wits. One dominant pox theme in the poems is the conflation of desire and syphilis as diseased and consuming appetites. Michael C. Schoenfeldt found an example of this conflation in Shakespeare's final two sonnets in which the *deux ex machina* of "the Anacreontic Cupid" and venereal disease were invoked to:

> Depict the baffling and incurable phenomenon of amorous passion. The speaker of these poems is "sick," a "sad distempered guest" and seeks a "sovereign cure" for "loves fire" in the "seething bath" which issued from the immersion of Cupids brand in "a could vallie-fountain." Shakespeare here plays with the idea that venereal disease, a malady of love often likened to fire (as in Sonnet 144), was thought to be ameliorated if not eradicated by baths, a kind of purge through the skin rather than the alimentary canal. The speaker of these sonnets, though, learns that "Love's fire heates water, water cooles not love." Desire is an infection, which is spread by the very act of trying to treat it.[23]

These images call to mind Donne's early (sometimes) poxy consumption metaphors, which we find in his satires, epigrams and love poetry. While Shakespeare's pox references in the sonnets are quite dark, they are made to suit the melancholy mood of the poet-persona and do not have the misanthropic resonance of his later references. They describe a dangerous form of corrupt consumption: the pursuit of amorous passion, and

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[23] Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79.

liken it to the pox. However, it is important to note that the sonnets present diseased, individual psyches and bodies, rather than the diseased world or body politic as offered by the late verse satirists.

In many ways the characters of the Henry IV plays bandy syphilis about in the same appetitive manner as the sonnets, albeit in an expansive carnival mood that suits Falstaff's rollicking nature. When King Henry IV, his councilors or the rebels describe the body politic as ailing, their visions of the diseased body politic are notable for the absence of pox references. In the Henry plays, rather than in the realm of power and privilege, syphilis is part of the earthy world of the low-born or criminal where characters like Falstaff invoke the disease to describe acquisitive and appetitive natures.

In both parts of the Henry IV plays, Falstaff's humor conceals acts of dissimulation. Falstaff uses humor to deflect blame, but his jibes always return to his incontinent appetites and his language reveals a constant grotesque association with corporeality—eating, drinking, sweating and sex—which at least in the tavern scenes elicits references to syphilis. In *1 Henry IV,* the tavern is a nexus of several appetites. It is equated with a bawdy house (3.3.98-99), and shortly thereafter, Falstaff tells the hostess "there's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune" (3.3.112-113). His comparison of the hostess to a stewed prune is based on an innuendo that suggests that she is either a prostitute or a madam, since stewed prunes were commonly served in brothels.[24] After further sexually explicit exchange, Hal finally loses his temper with Falstaff, calling him a "whoreson impudent embossed rascal" (3.3.157-158). While Hal's

[24] The practice of serving stewed prunes in brothels was common enough that "stews" became one of the most common slang terms for houses of prostitution. For a full explanation of the brothel, prostitutes, and poxy connotations of stewed prune, see Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London: Athlone, 1994), vol. 3, 1312-1315.

insult may intend to represent Falstaff as a cornered beast ("rascal" at the time could mean deer as well as a rogue), I believe that Hal is also implying that Falstaff is poxy varlet—Falstaff's lustful, gluttonous nature in the form of syphilitic buboes marks him as Jacques' poxy sins have "embossed" him in *As You Like It* (2.7.67).

By *2 Henry IV,* Falstaff's poxy-appetitive language becomes far more explicit as Shakespeare began to express the verse satirists' themes and content. Shakespeare opens the play with an invocation voiced by the character, Rumor. While Rumor, with his many eyes and tongues, is reminiscent of classical—and particularly, Virgilian—imagery, he is also a character which would have been suited to satirically criticize dandies and the corruption of court life.[25] Furthermore, Rumor proceeds to anatomize himself and then mildly challenges the audience with the question:

> What need I thus
> My well-known body to anatomize
> Among my household? (*2 Henry IV,* 1.1.21-22)

Rumor's question upholds a characteristic satirical challenge since he asks why he need explain himself in his household, or among people of his kind. As we have seen in the previous chapter, a convention of verse satirists was often to insult, attack and implicate their audience. In his anatomy, Rumor suggests that he is a tool of humorist-type personalities upon whose "tongues continual slanders ride" along with "false reports," dissimulation, "blown by surmises, jealousy's conjectures;" in short, one that any "can play upon" (1.1.6, 8, 16, 20).

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[25] Rumor appears in *The Aeneid* (4.173-197)as a swift, winged and strong female creature that walks on the ground with her head in the clouds. She has as many tongues as feathers and she never sleeps. See Virgil, *Vergil's Aeneid and Fourth (Messianic) Eclogue,* trans. John Dryden (Unversity Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989).

The satirical flavor adopted by Shakespeare from the outset of *2 Henry IV* is directly reflected in Doll and Falstaff's piquant pox word play in 2.4. As soon as Falstaff enters, he sets the tone both for the poxy metaphors and the complex quibbles that ensue. The extended poxy exchange in *2 Henry IV* initiates a fundamental shift from grotesque to biting satire and from light-hearted comedy to cynical disillusionment. This pockified exchange involves nothing less than "a radical reassessment" of Falstaff.[26] When Mistress Quickly says that Doll is "sick of a calm" (2.4.36), Falstaff replies, "So is all her sect; an they be once in a calm, they are/ sick" (2.4.38-39). In this complex quibble, the sex/sect word-play refers to Doll's gender and her profession as prostitute. The calm/qualm world-play juxtaposes calm with qualm, a sudden fit. In other words, Falstaff is claiming that (a) women are unwell when quiet, and (b) that as a prostitute, Doll will sicken if she cannot have sex.[27] Falstaff's joke and reasoning relies on the concept that women with voracious sexual appetites became prostitutes to sate their desires rather than as a desperate resort in response to severe social or economic straits.

In response to Falstaff's attack, Doll introduces the pox by cursing Falstaff. Falstaff, who ironically seems to have been literally poxed, returns the insult by saying that she "makes fat rascals" (2.4.40). In this statement, Falstaff characteristically uses his wit to dissimulate: he blames Doll for making fat rascals. Rascal, which traditionally had

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[26] R.W. McConchie, "'Foul Sin Gathering Head:' V.D. in Shakespeare's *Henry the IV, Part II*," *Parergon* 32 (1982), 33.

[27] In *Pericles,* Shakespeare offers a similar but extremely morbid vision of prostitutes sick of a calm when the pander and Boult are shopping for new slave-prostitutes since their old ones are rotten with syphilis:

> *Pander*: The poor Transylvanian
> is dead that lay with the little baggage.
> *Boult*: Ay, she quickly pooped him,
> she made him roast meat for worms. (16.20-23)

The Pander and Boult must shop for new prostitutes because the old ones are killing off their customers by roasting them with syphilis. In the previous scene, the bawd revealed that their prostitutes are too ill to work: "the stuff we have a strong wind will blow to pieces, they are so pitifully sodden" (15.17.18).

meant rabble and often signified common soldiery or camp followers, had in the late sixteenth century come to mean "a low, mean, unprincipled or dishonest fellow; a rogue, knave, scamp"; furthermore, by the early seventeenth century, it could also be used as a mild endearing reproof.[28] Falstaff certainly fits the bill as a fat rascal; however, a rascal was also a male deer, and as René Weis has posited, Falstaff is arguing that Doll "renders lean deer gross and bloated, presumably through venereal disease (as her further reply suggests)."[29] Despite the deer or miscreant quibble, Doll cuts through Falstaff's witticisms and recognizes that "Gluttony and diseases make/ them; I make them not" (2.4.41-42). If Falstaff is using this discussion to blame Doll for his faults, but she rebuts the argument by saying that it is gluttony which has made Falstaff obese.

Falstaff is still not willing to accept responsibility for his condition and he expands his argument to address both sexual and alimentary appetites: "If the cook help to make the gluttony, you help/ to make the diseases, Doll" (2.4.43-44). Clearly separating gluttony and obesity from lechery and the pox, Falstaff's twisted logic blames both the cook for his obesity and Doll for his disease. His repetitive self-serving deprecation apparent in his counter-accusation, "we catch of you, Doll, we catch/ of you; grant my poor virtue, grant that" allows Doll a new attack (2.4.44-45). Doll transforms Falstaff's catching of disease into the catching of "our chains and jewels" (2.2.46). Falstaff is profiting from Doll's prostitution; he is perhaps even stealing her valuables: a behavior that would be keeping entirely in character with his rascal-like dishonesty. Again, Falstaff reinterprets Doll's words to amplify his argument that she has poxed him.

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[28] Both definitions are from the *OED*; however the *OED* does not record rascal as an endearing term prior to 1610. Rascal also has sexual connotations and can refer to "an inferior sexual partner" and/or a "man without genitals," possibly referring to the Italian *racaglione*—"a man without testicles." Williams, *Dictionary,* vol. 3, 1143-1144.

[29] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 2,* ed. René Weis (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1998), 172.

Her jewels and chains become "brooches, pearls and ouches" (2.2.47) all of which were descriptive terms for skin eruptions associated with pox infections.[30] Falstaff continues in a sexual-soldierly description:

> For to serve
> Bravely is to come halting off, you know; to come off the
> Breach with his pike bent bravely, and to surgery
> Bravely; to venture upon the charge chambers
> Bravely— (2.2.47-52)

Perhaps the idea of jewels and prizes has stirred Falstaff's blood. He embarks on this battle-image, which is interlaced with images of sexual conquest and the pox. "To serve bravely" is either service in battle or sexual service, and the resulting "halting" is a war wound, or the halting gait of the Neapolitan bone-ache. The pike, as with Marston's Tubrio, is representative as both a weapon of war and a penis; likewise, its breach-vagina counterpart upholds the traditional sexual conquest imagery of woman as a walled city. Finally, the charged chamber is both a loaded firearm and a sexually diseased vagina.[31]

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[30] According to the *OED,* brooches, pearls and ouches were all elements of jewelry. The only one not in common usage today is ouch, which was "A clasp, buckle, fibula, or brooch, for holding together the two sides of a garment; hence, a clasped necklace, bracelet, or the like; also, a buckle or brooch worn as an ornament (the chief meaning in later times)." The jewelry-skin disease connection is a visual interpretation. Pearls, for example, describe pustule-headed, pimple-like eruptions while ouches, an Elizabethan term for jewelry, might be a carbuncular sore.

[31] René Weis suggests that this same image appears in "Sonnet 144" when the poet conjectures that the Dark Lady, "the worser spirit" has seduced his male lover, "the better angel." See René Weis, footnote, *Henry IV, Part 2* by William Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1998), 173. In "Sonnet 144," the charged chamber is the Dark Lady's diseased vagina:

> And whether that my angel be turned fiend
> Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,
> But being both from me, both to each friend,
> I guess one angel is in another's hell.
> Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
> Till my bad angel fire my good one out. (9-14)

In this instance, the poet suspects his male lover is sleeping with his female lover, or as he says, "one angel is in another's hell." He is not sure of his suspicion and decides that he will only know when the Dark Lady "fires" the good angel out of her vagina—presumably through the fire of a sexually transmitted infection.

Henry V: A Shift from the Carnivalesque to the Cynical

According to McConchie, the extended pockified theme of *2 Henry IV,* 4.2, prepares the audience for Falstaff's rejection:

> The action of this lengthy scene in the Boar's Head is in itself rather trivial... while, however, the brawls, disagreements, and bouts of repartee continue on their desultory way, Shakespeare ruthlessly slashes away at his gross creation, steadily removing his claims to consideration and mercy.[32]

Falstaff's visits to the Boar's Head reveal that he is not only a whoremaster, but also a pimp and thief in a lexical and physical process in which his external physical corruption mirrors his internal moral decay. The scene ends with "Falstaff's military double entendres," which:

> Are an apt anticipation of the entrance of Ancient Pistol, whose very name is an obscenity and who fires a salvo of indecencies at Doll and the Hostess. Doll suggests that Pistol himself is appropriately infected when she accuses him of living "upon moldy stewed prunes and dried cakes" (*2 Henry IV,* 2.4.143).[33]

In *Henry V,* Pistol and the Hostess will replace the dying Falstaff and Doll as the syphilitic couple in focus. As a result, the play's most pockified actions serve to usher in the future syphilitic focus of the play: the diseased pride of Pistol.

In 1599, only two years after the production of *1 Henry IV*, Shakespeare would put a somber full stop to the poxy exchange between Doll and Falstaff in *Henry V.* Reminiscent of the verse satirists' macabre fascination with the trials and tribulations involved in treatment of syphilitics, Pistol exclaims,

> To the spittle goe, and from the Poudring tub of infamy,
> Fetch forth the Lazar Kite of Cressids kinde, Doll

[32] McConchie, 33.
[33] McConchie also notes that "'Stewed prunes' was also a euphemism for 'whores.'" McConchie, 34.

Teare-sheete." (*Henry V,* 2.1.72-75)

Pistol sarcastically is sending for Doll, who has been sent to the "spital" to be cured of the pox, to taunt Nym. Recalling Cressid's condition, she is described in leprous terms, "a lazar." She is found in the powdering tub—the same sort of sweating treatment that Lodge's Diffilus has undergone to the detriment of his ears.

If Doll is suffering from the pox, the last we hear of Falstaff, at least in *2 Henry IV*, is that he "shall die of a sweat, unless already a be killed with your hard Opinions" (Ep. 28-29). Falstaff never appears in *Henry V.* Somewhere off stage, his sweating death is realized in the form of a "burning/ quotidian tertian, that it is most lamentable to/ behold" (*Henry V,* 2.2.113-114). This fever remains a mystery—is it for his great obesity, or his excessive cowardice? He admits to his syphilis on his deathbed confession that "the devil would have him about women" (*Henry V,* 2.3.33). By this, I suspect that he means that he will burn because of women. Falstaff's view that women "were devils/ incarnate" (2.3.30) both succeeds his own similar announcement that Doll "is in hell already, and burns poor souls" (*2 Henry IV,* 2.2.320-321), and prefigures King Lear's view of women's vaginas as poxy, burning hells (*King Lear,* 4.6.121-126).

With the preponderance of pox banter in the earlier stages of *2 Henry IV,* one expects that Falstaff's "sweating" promises similar carnivalesque exchanges in the future. However, the pox—a disease of railing and derision in *2 Henry IV*—has by the time of *Henry V* escalated into the dark *deux ex machina* that has probably killed Falstaff and has forced Doll into the spittle. Falstaff and Doll are not the only victims of the pox in *Henry V,* a possibly pockified Pistol, described as "a scald knave" (5.1.5) by Fluellen, tells the audience of the poxy fate of his paramour: "News have I, that my Nell is dead i' the

spital/ Of malady of France" (5.1.76-77). After Pistol is beaten by Fluellen, he reveals both a sense of dejection and depravity:

> Honour is cudgelled. Well, bawd I'll turn,
> And something lean to cutpurse of quick hand.
> To England will I steal, and there I'll steal,
> And patches will I get unto these cudgell'd scars,
> And swear I got them in the Gallia wars. (5.1.81-85)

Pistol, deflated of his braggadocio honor, has become much like Falstaff. He, who once in his pride and fury mocked Nym with a union with the "lazar-kite" Doll, finds his own mistress doomed to a similar fate. The pox is a characteristic of Falstaff's London underworld: it serves as an indicator of what Shakespeare wants the audience (and Hal) to think of this world. As a result, the pockified banter between Falstaff and Doll in *2 Henry IV* was quite light-hearted, but by the time of *Henry V*, the pox was no longer a laughing matter. These individuals' syphilis infections are the microcosmic reflection of Henry IV's macrocosmic vision of the diseased and treasonous country in beginning of *2 Henry IV*: "Then you perceive the body of our kingdome, How foule it is, what rancke diseases grow,/ And with what danger neare the heart of it" (*2 Henry IV,* 3.1.39-41). Henry IV's rank, foul body politic is composed of the morally and physically poxed bodies of Nell, Pistol, Falstaff and Doll.

Misanthropy, Verse Satire and the Stage

By the 1598 and 1599 productions of *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V,* Shakespeare would have been familiar with at least some of the verse satirists' publications and their overwhelming scourging of what they viewed as the decayed state of the age, a period

> When dead's the strength of England's yeomanrie
> When inundation of luxuriousnes,

Fatts all the world with such grosse beastilines."[34]

It is likely that there was a mutual influence occurring between stage and verse satire. The theme of degeneracy, which dominated the work of late Elizabethan verse satirists, was exemplified by Shakespeare in the form of the diseases in Falstaff's world. From *1 Henry IV* to *Henry V*, the audience is presented with a steadily degenerating world. In this descent, Stanley Mackenzie distinguished between:

> The genuinely witty Falstaff of Part 1 and the Falstaff in Part 2 whose wit is so often based on other peoples' miseries. Falstaff's entire environment has degenerated in Part 2. In Part 1, Mistress Quickly apparently had an honest husband, well loved by the Prince (*1 Henry IV*, 3.3.98), and ran a respectable tavern, but in Part 2, she is a widow (2.1.82) and seems to be operating a brothel... Immediately before Falstaff's rejection, Hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet are hauled away to prison for having, along with Pistol, beaten a man to death (4.4.16-17). Although humorous, the voracious excesses of Falstaff and his companions have now become deadly.[35]

The poxy sickness of soldiers such as Tubrio and Falstaff are symptoms of the greater illness that is affecting English society. The verse satirists' vision of decayed military might and the wasted strength of the English soldier (represented by the irresponsible yeoman) very closely resembles Falstaff's misuse of the military levy for his benefit and to the detriment of the commonwealth when, in *1 Henry IV*, he admits that he has:

> Misused the King's press damnably. I
> have got in exchange of a hundred-and-fifty soldiers
> three hundred and odd pounds. I press me none but
> good house holders, yeomen's sons, enquire me out
> contracted bachelors, such as had been asked twice on
> the banns, such a commodity of warm slaves as had

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[34] John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie* (London, 1599), C3[r].
[35] Stanley D. MacKenzie, "The Prudence and Kinship of Prince Hal and John of Lancaster in *2 Henry IV*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* (April 1999): n. pag., Online, Internet, 4 July, 2004; this article was posted as a work in progress on the *Early Modern Literary Studies* website; it has since been published in *Shakespearean Criticism* 49 (2000).

> as life hear the devil as a drum, such as fear the report
> of a caliver worse than a struck fowl or a hurt wild
> duck. I pressed me none but such toasts-and-butter,
> with hearts in their bellies no bigger then pins' heads,
> and they have bought out their services. (4.2.12-20)

Falstaff has taken advantage of the existing social atmosphere. Rather than forcing recalcitrant middle class citizens to do their duty, he has let them buy out of military service—presumably precipitating further social decay. Furthermore, his actions are fundamentally treasonous; he has with calculation and greed allowed his profiteering to undermine the strength of the commonwealth. He has manned his company with "slaves as ragged as Lazarus in painted cloth... the cankers of a calm world and a long peace" (*1 Henry IV,* 4.2.21-26).[36] In *2 Henry IV,* his conscripts, Mouldy; Shadow; Wart, "a good scab" (3.2.273); Feeble, the effeminate women's tailor who is "a wrathful dove" (3.2.155) and Bullcalf, "a diseased man" with "a whoreson cold" (3.2.176, 178), reflect the diseased and depraved yield of his actions. In these instances, Falstaff reveals himself to be a satirist (in his commentary on both the yeomanry and the less fortunate members of society) who is both critical of others' foibles and aware of his own sins as much as the most duplicitous late sixteenth-century verse satire persona.

If Falstaff has sought the worst examples of English manhood to fund his private fortune, he is not far from being at the bottom of the list himself. Falstaff is strong and

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[36] Cankers, or necrotic sores, were a common descriptive element in Elizabethan English and were closely associated with the pox insomuch as they were an analogous image of decay and corruption. A canker described corruption of either a physical or psycho-moral nature, such as envy or sexual desire. In addition to his frequent use of pox images, Shakespeare introduced canker images in fourteen of his plays as well as *The Sonnets* and *Venus and Adonis*: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.2.3, 3.2.282); *Coriolanus* (4.5.91); *Hamlet* (1.3.39); *1 Henry IV* (1.3.137, 1.3.176, 4.2.29); *2 Henry IV* (2.2.95, 4.5.71); *1 Henry VI* (2.4.68,71), *2 Henry VI* (1.2.18); *King John* (3.4.82, 5.2.14); *King Lear* (5.3.122); *Much Ado about Nothing* (1.3.27); *Romeo and Juliet* (1.1.95, 2.3.30); *The Tempest* (1.2.416, 4.1.192); *Timon of Athens* (4.3.50); *Two Gentleman of Verona* (1.1.43, 46); *Venus and Adonis* (656, 767); *Sonnets* (35.5, 54.5; 70.7, 95.2, 99.13). Collected from: Martin Spevack, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973), 176-177.

vital; he is also obese and vice-ridden. In *1 Henry IV*, we see the massive, voluptuary Falstaff larding "the lean earth" (2.3.17) as he trundles away from his botched Gadshill robbery attempt, much like Marston's image of the luxurious Englishman who "Fatts all the world with such grosse beastilines." In *2 Henry IV,* this is the same Falstaff that would, after the publication of *The Scourge of Folly,* sweat to death either through fear or lust; and finally, he is the same knight that has subverted traditional hierarchical roles by abandoning his social position in favor of a bohemian life of appetitive pleasures and petty crime (*1 Henry IV,* 2.2.91). In these instances, Falstaff undermines conceptions of traditional social order, and his aberrant consumption is contextualized within, and amplified by, a pockified environment.

Staging Satire and Misanthropy in Every Man Out of His Humor

Falstaff provides an example of the progression from carnivalesque to Juvenalian stage satire, and while his poxy attributes develop from humorous banter to his and Doll's somber doom, he never reaches the misanthropic conclusion which becomes the fate of many late Elizabethan and Jacobean characters. When poxy satire diverges from the carnivalesque tradition, it grows closer to the Juvenalian ideal as propounded by the verse satirists. This situation is exacerbated by the satirical flytings that typified Elizabethan satire from the Marprelate controversy to the poet wars. These wars of words were transferred to the stage in the wars of the theaters and saw the reappearance of satirists like Marston battling with newcomers such as Jonson and Dekker. While satire was a response to social changes, flytings were personal attacks in which the satirist was satirized. Warring poets exposed their satirical foes to ridicule. In turn, these

attacks exposed Elizabethan satire's hypocritical outrage and desire just as they exposed the satirist himself.

While the influence of biting pox satire had found its way to the stage, it is not fully realized until 1599 when Jonson created *Every Man Out.* In this effort, Jonson imitated and attacked the verse satirists. In doing so, he appropriated the pre-existing form of the misanthrope to describe the satirist as an envious man-hater. In Macilente, Jonson equates misanthropy with envy.[37] The envious misanthrope had existed for some time, not as an independent character so much as an aspect of the authorial persona of the satirists. Greene, for example, described himself as a black-silk-wearing malcontent as early as 1583.[38] In *Every Man Out*, Jonson manipulated drama to replicate verse satire. Jonson used the

> Theater as a therapeutic hall of mirrors, purging playwright, actors, characters, and audience alike; by the end of Act 5, everyone, whether in or out of the play, has been satirically "Anatomized in every nerve and sinew" (Ind.119) and put "out of his humor."[39]

Not only did Jonson adapt verse satire to the stage, he peopled *Every Man Out* with caricatures of the verse satirists themselves. The conflicted nature of the verse satirist—as sinner and scourge of sin—invited contemporary criticism. The playwright also took part in this commentary by creating *Every Man Out's* two satirist-figures: Carlo Buffone and Macilente.

Buffone's model we have seen before in the previous chapter: he is said to be the same Charles Chester that Guilpin fondly recalls in *Skialetheia.* As I have discussed,

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[37] Whether the root of misanthropy is envy or not is a matter of conjecture: certainly, it would seem that the twice-wealthy Timon was not envious but one who genuinely despised mankind; however, the needy, affected Jacques and deformed Thersites are more likely candidates for having envious motives.
[38] Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 27.
[39] Helen Ostovich, introduction, *Every Man Out of his Humor* by Ben Jonson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 55.

Buffone was an oral satirist; as a result, Jonson was adapting satire to the stage and peopling the play with satirical figures that at least at times are satirist figures. Macilente may be Marston who was Jonson's enemy in the poet wars. Additionally, Jonson directly adapts the verse satirists' imagery: one example, as Ostovich points out, is the dog imagery runs throughout *Every Man Out* including "the image of the snarling dog (which) was associated with the satirical playwright, a 'one-headed Cerberus' with '*caninum appetitum*' (Ind. 336, 332), with the 'bandog' (2.1.382) gibes of Carlo, described as 'an open-throated, blackmouthed cur/ That bites at all' (1.2.234-5) and with envious Macilente, 'A lean mongrel… chap-fallen with barking at other men's good fortunes' (214-16)."[40]

Jonson's social contacts, like those of Shakespeare, had brought him into contact with the Inns of Court, which was the primary market for satire and the abode of many satirists. Jonson's relationship with satire was a few years old by the time he wrote *Every Man Out*: he had already taken part in writing *Ile of Dogges*—a collaborative effort that Jonson staged with Nashe and which is now lost. Though satire survived on stage and in manuscript, by 1599—which was also the year of the suppression of satire—there was no liberty for the satirists of *Every Man Out*, and Carlo, Jonson's dramatic representation of a satirist cynic-dog, finds himself muzzled with hot wax before the end of the play.

[40] Ostovich, 51.

Jacques and the Introduction of Pocky Misanthropy

In *Every Man Out,* Macilente and Carlo are presented as a brace of satirical figures.[41] Ostovich describes the personalities of the *Every Man Out*'s two characters:

> Carlo is the negative railer and detractor, the thoughtless buffoon; he enjoys exposing fools for his own idle amusement, not out of any moral conviction. Macilente... does want to effect intelligent conversion where he can... But, when he fails, he settles for exposure and suppression of folly as at least an ethical and social improvement, one that satisfies his gnawing envy of the good fortune he desires for himself, but sees wasted on the ignorant.[42]

Carlo and Macilente promote excess rather than moderation, while hypocritically maintaining the status of social critics in which "they find their target in the ethical vacuity of the world around them."[43]

As You Like It, a work that is contemporary to *Every Man Out*, also offers the audience a pair of contraposed worldly satirical characters in the persons of Jacques and Touchstone.[44] The two characters occupy roles that are remarkably similar to those of Macilente and Carlo. Jacques is the envious misanthrope to Touchstone's sensual oral satirist. While both Touchstone and Carlo make their living by their wits, the clown is protected from his tongue by virtue of being a fool—a position that Jacques wishes he held himself.[45] While not having the protection of a fool, Jacques is something of both a

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[41] Jonson offers a third satirist-figure in Asper, the playwright, who appears in the *grex*. *"Grex"* which was originally a Latin term for a crowd or herd, was applied to drama in the form of a group of characters that commentated on the actions that were occurring in the play. Asper, for example, who is meant to be the playwright, and his companions are represented as characters watching and commenting on the comedy.
[42] Ostovich, 54-55.
[43] Ostovich, 55.
[44] It is generally thought that *As You Like It* first hit the stage between 1599-1600. Michael Dobson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25.
[45] The topical nature of the clown-fool and satirist-misanthrope is a matter of contemporary literary criticism as well as a commentary on the social milieu. Authors such as Nashe and Harvey were not able to garner permanent patronage and had brought government censure down upon themselves because they could not effectively separate their personas from their identities. The verse satirists were able to shield

fool and a satirist. While his misanthropy dictates that he takes a skeptical, satirical view of the actions of men—his own behavior, even his misanthropy itself—is an affectation. The disguised Rosalind sees the hypocritical satirist behind the misanthrope:

> Farewell, Monsieur Traveler. Look you lisp,
> and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your
> own country; be out of love with your nativity, and
> almost chide God for making you that countenance
> you are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a
> gondola. (*As You Like It*, 4.1.31-36)

In this example, she castigates him for his affectations. He is an Italianate Englishman of the sort that both verse and prose satirists mocked: he lisps in order mimic a foreign speaker and he is attired in one of the outlandish outfits that so incensed the satirists.[46] He is detrimental to the commonwealth because he prefers foreign fashion and customs to his native Englishness. Finally, she goes so far to say that only his countenance, or dignity, makes her not doubt that he has ever been abroad at all—and that all his affectations are unfounded fancy. These observations come after Rosalind had already satirized both Jacques' traveler affectations and his misanthropy. She mocks his status as a traveler:

> A traveler! By my faith, you have great reason
> to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see
> other men's. Then, to have seen much and to have
> nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.
> (4.1.20-23)

She also equates Jacques' melancholy silence with uselessness when she compares him to a post (4.1.9). Rosalind is not alone in her criticism of Jacques. Earlier still, Duke Senior anatomized Jacques' behavior and found:

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themselves behind the satyr persona to some extent, but all probably envied the privileged position of the fool who could speak his mind and escape censure.

[46] *As You Like It* is nominally set in France; the scene is very much an Elizabethan English comedy of manners which explores English themes and character types.

> Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin;
> For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
> As sensual as the brutish sting itself;
> And all th' embossed sores and headed evils,
> That thou with license of free foot hast caught,
> Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.
> (2.7.64-69)

The duke reveals the psychology behind Jacques' relationship with sin: he was a sinner of the same mould as his satirical subjects, and he remains a hypocrite-sinner for scourging others' sins. Jacques was a libertine, a sensualist, who sinned and has paid for his sin with the "embossed sores and headed evils" which suggest a pox infection of raised buboes and skin eruptions. He caught these sores through his promiscuity, or "license of free foot." Presumably enraged at this punishment, he releases his disease indiscriminately into the world, disgorging it in the form of hate. As such, Jacques is indulging in at least three of the seven deadly sins: pride, wrath and envy. Rather than searching for humility and acceptance in the face of his poxy punishment as John Fisher might have suggested, he becomes enraged and hates all men, and he is envious of the good fortunes of others. Duke Senior's psychological scrutiny does nothing to alleviate Jacques' misanthropy, only lines later he embarks on his famous nihilistic vision of the seven ages of man (2.7.139-166).

Poxy Appetitive Discontent in "Troilus and Cressida"

AIDS is everyone's Trojan horse.[47]

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[47] Susan Sontag, "AIDS and its Metaphors" in *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1991), 166.

In 1602, Shakespeare satirized society by dramatizing poxy systems, psyches, and ideologies in *Troilus and Cressida*. Both the prose and verse satirists had associated pox imagery with societal concerns; however, the pox metaphor largely remained within the domain of concrete illustrations of these problems as in *poxy* texts or *poxy* fashion. The Wits and the verse satirists employed pox metaphors as a symptom or signifier of issues they wished to discuss. By the early seventeenth century, Shakespeare began to experiment with the plasticity of pox perceptions generated by the body-centered episteme.[48] Since early moderns conceptualized their world from a body-centered point-of-view, disease began to exist independently within language, in linguistic, psychological and political conceptions. In this atmosphere, the psychological and social syphilitic corruption is as real as the physical incidence of the disease. This is to say, that a poxy body politic is as real as a poxy body. With this in mind, Shakespeare anatomized the corruption of Troy and the Greek camp in layers of pockified perceptions, and he closed with the poxing of Pandarus, which was then transmitted through the centuries and bequeathed to Elizabethan London.

Shakespeare began his development of a pockified Troy based on a framework of "traditional reservations over mercantile exchange and merchant adventurism," and he coupled these concerns with the conventional connection between "military conflict" and "the commodification of sex."[49] Both sexual and governmental politics are represented: "there is a politics of erotic desire in this play, but there is also a political problem in the

[48] Healy describes disease as an "unstable construct" which is "historically- and culturally-determined." Margaret Healy, "Seeing Contagious Bodies in Early Modern England," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Darryl Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 159.
[49] Bruster, 99, 106.

strict sense."[50] Girard stated that the political conundrum in *Troilus and Cressida* is "the problem of Agamemnon's lack of authority."[51] While this is certainly true, there are several other political problems, mostly stemming from flawed evaluations. Priam and his sons display poor and misguided judgments, especially in their discussion on the worthiness of the war and the cost of keeping Helen; furthermore, Nestor and Ulysses make equally misguided assessments.[52] Bruster's vision of economic crisis and Girard's insistence on the importance of desire in *Troilus and Cressida* are both astute readings. They can be combined under a reading that addresses Shakespeare's satirical vision of all-consuming appetites and their role in destabilizing London-Troy.[53] The danger of out-of-control appetites is represented by repetitive disease imagery which runs throughout the play, from "the 'open ulcer' of Troilus' heart in the opening scene to Pandarus' sickly complaint about his aching bones in the epilogue which concludes with the word 'diseases.'"[54] At the heart of these conflicts is a struggle in which pride and appetite—in various guises—overthrow reason.

Troilus and Cressida is a satire about this very conflict between appetite and reason. The satire, "a Trojan history of the present," conflates early modern London and its mythical forbear, Troy, and generates a somewhat hysterical message: "if Troy fell, so

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[50] Girard, *Theater,* 121.
[51] Girard, *Theater,* 121.
[52] Girard, *Theater,* 121.
[53] Muir has come close to combining these themes:

> That the play is concerned with the nature of Value is borne out by the imagery relating to distribution and exchange... The numerous images related to sickness are concerned partly with sex, and partly with the sickness of anarchy in the Greek camp, so that these images serve to link the two plots together.

While Muir looks at value, he does not scrutinize it in so much an economic sense or from the viewpoint of early modern commodification. Similarly, his work on sexuality and sickness has little to do with syphilis and these same themes. See Kenneth Muir, "Troilus and Cressida," *Aspects of Shakespeare's Problem Plays,* eds. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 103.
[54] Vivian Thomas, *The Moral Universe of Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (London: Croom Helm: 1987), 129.

must London."[55] In *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare incorporates this anxiety in a portrayal of the Trojan War which draws its energy from "the growing restlessness and uncertainty of the late Elizabethan era."[56] The appetitive propensities of London, both in the political and economic spheres, had been common currency for more than a decade. Nashe had imagined London as the nexus of both consumption and corruption. At the heart of London is the "Courte is as it were a devouring Gulfe of gold, and the consumption of coyne."[57] Nashe envisioned both London itself as a seething, corrupt economic entity, "the great grandmother of corporations," and the court as its consumptive heart. Shakespeare consolidates the image of corruption within both the city and court in *Troilus and Cressida*: "one should not separate the court and monarch from commerce and the domestic; *Troilus and Cressida* insists on their linkage, portraying the Trojan War, in part, as an amplified struggle between merchant powers."[58] These several themes are joined together through an examination of the destructive force of excessive appetite, which Shakespeare illustrated with poxy language, the pockified transformation of Pandarus, and his projection of syphilis onto the Elizabethan audience.

Rather than Helen or Cressida, Shakespeare selected Pandarus—the poxed purveyor of corrupt exchanges and the embodiment of destructive appetitive desire—as the archetypal example of the Greek and Trojan societies' degeneracy.[59] Pandarus'

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[55] Bruster, 99.
[56] Bruster, 102, 99.
[57] Nashe, *The Anatomy of Absurdity,* ed. McKerrow, 33.
[58] Bruster, 102.
[59] Many scholars have discussed Shakespeare's subversion of the Troy myth. See Katherine Duncan-Jones' comments on *Troilus* "as a darkly cynical re-write of Chaucer" in *Ungentle Shakespeare* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), 219-221; W.R. Elton's description of Shakespeare's Greeks and Trojans as an inversion of "traditional notions of Homeric characters" in *Troilus and Cressida and the Inns of Court Revels* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 46, or Heather James who argues that Shakespeare "twists, disorders, and occasionally inverts versions of the Troy legend" in order to present it as "driven by political and economic hunger" in Helen James *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 89.

actions and behavior prove to be indicative of the unregulated, often carnal, appetites that Shakespeare sees behind the tragedy of Troy. According to Katherine Duncan-Jones, Pandarus and Thersites never allow the audience to "forget the association of heterosexual love with disease."[60] It might also be said that Pandarus and Thersites never let the audience forget the association between lust, lechery and syphilis. Thersites never mentions love but has plenty to say about lechery. The more socially unctuous Pandarus pays lip service to love, but he invariably degenerates into a celebration of carnality in his song, "Love, love, nothing but love, still love, still more!," which after the two initial lines descends irrevocably into crude sensuality in which Cupid's arrows are likened to penises and their wounds to vaginas: "That shaft confounds/ Not that it wounds, But tickles still the sore" (3.1.99, 102-104). In *Troilus and Cressida*, Thersites and Pandarus are both commentators on the nature of their societies. Both reiterate the link between war and lechery: two actions that exemplify the pursuit of appetites. In the play, "sexual desire… is contagious," as we see in Pandarus' pandering as well as in the proliferation of destructive appetites.[61] More importantly, there is the explicit relationship between appetite and disease. Again, Pandarus' bawdry serves as the central example: "Pandarus infects others with his own desire, and then reinfects himself with the communicated infection."[62] These examples culminate in the poxing of Pandarus and the audience.

By the start of the fifth act, the dangers of the appetitive policies that Pandarus propagates are beginning to be felt. Simultaneously, Pandarus describes himself as the victim of increasingly syphilitic symptoms. In this sense Pandarus is the embodiment of

[60] Duncan-Jones, 221.
[61] Girard, *Theater,* 105.
[62] Girard, *Theater,* 153.

pockified ideological monstrosity. Shakespeare chooses Pandarus as the epitome of the sexual, appetitive Trojan and Greek cultures. Pandarus' poxy symptoms serve as a reflection of social discontent and discontinuity, and Shakespeare uses his body as the paradigm of "the contagious body—a source of considerable personal and collective anxiety," which functions as "a highly charged political site." [63] Pandarus' body-infection is not only a reflection of the personal, but it also serves as a place in which Shakespeare represents the general societal malaise. As a result, Pandarus' infection and his pockified vision are both signifier and criticism of a culture that wars for a woman.[64] His bequest of the disease to his Elizabethan audience implicates them as collaborators in a similar bawd-and-pander world.

Emulation and Unnatural Appetite: Troy and the Greek Camp

In the fourth scene of the final act of *Troilus and Cressida*, Pandarus turns to the audience in an aside and perhaps with a cough or in a broken voice says "A whoreson phthisic" (5.3.104). In this first fragment of a sentence, Pandarus complains about a phthisic, or throat ailment.[65] Up to this point, there has been no indication that Pandarus was in poor health. In fact, his language and actions seem to indicate the contrary. He is an older man, but he acts youthful, vivacious and lusty, and like Shakespeare's Chaucerian model, he is "worldly-wise and witty... full of stratagems, proverbs, jokes and fibs."[66] He has not only engineered Troilus and Cressida's affair but also entertained

[63] Healy, "Contagious Bodies," 159.
[64] The conflict over Helen highlights: "the symbolic link between lust and other—notably the economic—appetites [that] is conspicuous throughout the play." Williams, *Revolution,* 102.
[65] Duncan-Jones equates Pandarus' phthisic with "wasting sickness," thus linking the idea of Tuberculosis-like consumption with the pox. Duncan-Jones, 221.
[66] Nevill Coghill, introduction, *Troilus and Criseyde* by Geoffrey Chaucer, 8th ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1982), xvii.

Paris and Helen with erotic song and rarely does he appear in a scene before the final act without a bawdy innuendo (3.1.99-110).

Pandarus continues: "a whoreson rascally/ Phthisic so troubles me" (5.4.101-102). Pandarus' phthisic is pivotal; it is at this very moment that he begins to undergo a rapid, degenerative transformation that both anticipates and parallels the destructive climax of the play. No longer will the audience see the man who was Troilus' "sweet Pandarus" of the first act (1.1.80). Instead, they are assaulted with increasingly pockified representations of Pandarus as his corrosive effect on the society around him is revealed. In this earliest reference to Pandarus' ill-health, Shakespeare establishes a psychosomatic link that bridges his ailments and ideology. After discussing his throat, Pandarus tells the audience of other things that trouble him: "the foolish fortune of this girl; and what one thing, what another, that I shall leave you one o'these days" (5.3.101-103). Pandarus foreshadows his prophecy of his syphilitic death in the last lines of the play. He is not only troubled by his health but by Cressida's situation. He associates his physical suffering with the mental anguish that he experiences over Cressida's predicament. While some scholars have suggested that Pandarus' concern about the young lovers is altruistic, he seems petulant and self-centered, especially since Troilus is at that very moment poignantly reliving the pain of Cressida's betrayal.[67] Pandarus does worry about Cressida, but he appears selfish since his concern seems unwelcome and even troublesome to him. Pandarus continues to catalogue his complaints: "And I have a rheum in mine eyes too,/ and such an ache in my bones that, unless a man were/ Cursed I

[67] Dawson, for example, asserts that "Pandarus has moments when he seems to really care about his young friends." Antony Dawson, footnote, *Troilus and Cressida,* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

cannot tell what to think on't" (5.3.103-105). Pandarus' phthisic, rheum and bone-ache are all symptoms of syphilis.[68]

Pandarus' declining health comes to mirror both his corruption and the deleterious effect his actions have on those around him. Shakespeare's vision of Pandarus' metamorphosis may have been visual as well as vocalized. In a production of *Troilus,* the revelation of his moral corrosiveness might be mirrored by his physical degeneration. His phthisic, which may have changed the timbre of his voice, might cause him to squawk, cough or even lose the power of speech at times. His rheum would manifest itself as a discharge from his eyes and nose, and he may drool or spit as well: excessive salivation was frequently associated with syphilis in general and the mercury treatment in particular, while the bone-ache could deform both his posture and his gait. Pandarus is turning as beastly as his depredations.

Real, Ideological or Dramatic Poxing?

Shakespeare used Pandarus to manipulate the border between ideological and physical conceptions of disease. Neither Thersites' poxy curses; Pandarus' pox; nor the general syphilitic infection of the audience need be read in concrete, biological terms. Rather, these incidents might be seen as part of Shakespeare's complex exploration of what the pox had come to mean within Elizabethan society and what the audience would have assumed from the use of pockified discourse. Where the Wits and verse satirists

[68] Shakespeare also referred to syphilis attacking the throat in *Timon of Athens* (4.3.154-156). Rheum was often associated with syphilis when it attacked the cartilage of the nose and the soft tissues of the eyes, like the "half out" eyes of Pandarus' audience (5.11.46). However, Shakespeare most often uses the bone-ache as a casual reference to syphilis. In *Troilus and Cressida* alone it appeared four other times: (2.3.17, 5.1.21-22, 5.10.35 and 5.10.49)

had described the pox to give the world structure—economically, intellectually, religiously and socially—in *Troilus,* Shakespeare deconstructed the pox metaphor.

In Pandarus' curse, the Trojans and Greeks—and by implication the audience themselves—are part of a world in which appetites particularly of a sexual nature overwhelm the better part of mankind. Pandarus offers a clue to the psychological impetus behind his pockified bequest:

> Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing
> Till he hath lost his honey and his sting,
> And being once subdued in armèd tail,
> Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.
> (5.11.40-43)

Pandarus is envious; he is the humble-bee that has lost his sting.[69] In this reading, Pandarus implies that he is poxed and impotent as a consequence of an assignation with a diseased woman.[70] Throughout the play, Pandarus is sexuality without action. He is seemingly impotent from the pox and emasculated through venery. One might go so far as to say that Pandarus is emasculated twice over. According to humoral theory, a man who had too much sex risked "weakness, loss of physical strength, loss of rational control… his humoral balance could be permanently altered… [and] he would become effeminate;" furthermore, satirists used syphilis-induced impotence as an exemplar of emasculation via venery.[71] After Troilus' rejection, Pandarus struggles with the

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[69] Duncan-Jones makes a further metatextual association between the humble-bee and a pockified Shakespeare. While the armèd tail still implies a poxy woman, she believes that the humble-bee is a poxed Shakespeare who will be silenced in death. See, Duncan-Jones, 221-222.

[70] Kenneth Muir, footnote, *Troilus and Cressida,* by William Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 192. It is important to note that one can find the same image in *2H4,* when Falstaff imagines that he ventures upon a "charged chamber" with his pike bent bravely" (*2H4* 2.2.50, 51). Even as early as the *Sonnets*, the poet fears that the dark lady will pox his male friend, or that his "bad angel fire […] (his) good one out" ("Sonnet 144," 14). All of these images of women with stinging bottoms or poxy fiery tails probably were first popularized by Greene's Lamia, scorpion and bee images that I discussed in Chapter 4. For a description of Sonnet 144's fire and pox images, see Gordon Williams' "A Sample of Elizabethan Sexual Periphrasis," *Trivium* 3 (1968), 99.

[71] Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16.

combined force of his sexual and social emasculation: both his social role as a pander and his sexual outlet through voyeurism have been curtailed. If Pandarus' impoverished sting was his sexual potency, the honey was his power to attract and to broker assignations—a surrogate for sexual gratification.[72]

Pandarus' humble-bee verse is the more complex for the fact that his social potency and remaining outlet for sexual gratification are intertwined. Despite Pandarus' impotency, he seems to seek gratification by titillating others. Girard explains the psychology behind this impulse: "at the origin of a desire there is always the spectacle of another real or illusory desire."[73] Several years later, Girard explains Pandarus' hidden desire as the incestuous hope that Cressida will fall for him.[74] Girard may become somewhat overly specific here; however, Pandarus' motivation seems to be the attempt to gratify his now unquenchable sexual appetite in a non-specific sense. As such, he not only creates the assignation between Troilus and Cressida, but also sexually entertains Helen and Paris with erotic song. Pandarus' sexuality is unproductive and dangerous, and his somewhat elevated social position in Troy, indicated by his proximity to prince Troilus, reveals the level of threat that he poses to the commonwealth. Pandarus' sin of lechery, which has destroyed his own masculinity, will also destroy the lives of Troilus and Cressida. Despite his impotence, sex so dominates his life that he finds gratification in the sexual exploits of others.[75] When compared to a character like Marston's Tubrio, Pandarus not only destroys himself, but as a bawd, he helps to destroy others, and as a result, he is exponentially dangerous to the commonwealth.

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[72] Dawson, 232.
[73] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel,* trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 105.
[74] For Girard's argument see, "O Pandarus" in *Theater,* 152-159.
[75] Pandarus' voyeuristic psyche "derives as much pleasure from his part in the transaction as either of lovers." Thomas, 48.

It is only after Pandarus is cursed by Troilus as the progenitor of all panders that he expresses himself in completely pockified terms.[76] However, he first denies his culpability in the debacle surrounding him when he bewails his betrayal:

> O world, world—
> Thus is the poor agent despised. O traitors and bawds, how
> Earnestly are you set a-work and how ill-requited! Why should
> Our endeavour be so loved and the performance so loathed?"
> (5.11.35-38)

Pandarus' association of bawds with traitors is both astute and ironic. The services of panders and traitors are often desired, but the position itself is undesirable and not respectable. Pandarus' moaning may belie his seeming ignorance about his own culpability. Both traitors and panders are threatening to the commonwealth. Traitors, like Pandarus' kinsmen Calchas, betray the trust of their sovereign and homeland, while bawds damage the commonwealth by subverting the ideals of chastity and marriage which are conducive to social order.[77] To an early modern audience, Pandarus, as a bawd, helps facilitate sexual liaisons outside of marriage—the traditional means of controlling female sexual appetites, and his services gave women the opportunity to follow the predilections of their semi-autonomous wombs.[78] According to early modern theory, women and their wombs' "natural craving could not simply be left to run unchecked, for it would lead to widespread social disorder."[79] Ian Frederick Moulton further explains this connection between female reproductive control and social order:

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[76] Pandarus' aside in 5.4 offers some syphilitic symptoms which foreshadow his pockified outburst in the epilogue, just as his earlier instances of phthisicy illness foreshadow his self-prophesized syphilitic death.
[77] Gail Paster offers an informative discussion on desire in the chapter "Leaky Vessels, The Incontinent Women of City Comedy," in the *Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 23-63.
[78] For more on Renaissance conceptions of the quasi- or semi-autonomous womb, see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London: Routledge, 1995), 213-215; Paster, 45-46, 174-178, and Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 224-239.
[79] Moulton, 16.

> Women were often understood to be the property of their male relatives—especially their husbands and fathers—and their sexual productivity was a valuable and necessary resource of the patriarchal family, they could not simply be left to run wild. Their desires needed to be channeled in socially productive and orderly directions.[80]

In this sense, Pandarus proves traitorous to the social system just as his kinsmen, Calchas, betrays the state. In a similar sense, when Troilus falls, Troy falls—the play is an extended system of analogies in which the moral-sexual collapse of Troilus and Cressida's relationship mirrors the physical collapse of Troy itself.

As opposed to Pandarus' syphilis and prophesied death, Shakespeare's Cressida escapes a "final judgment" in sharp contrast to the punishment meted out by Henryson's angry God in a long description of her leprous suffering.[81] If anything, Cressida appears to be a victim. Since *Testament of Cresseid* was published with *Troilus and Criseyde,* it is probable that Shakespeare would have been aware of Henryson's leprous Cressid; furthermore, it is possible that he was also aware of Dalila's similar, syphilitic punishment in *Nice Wanton.*[82] Rather than attacking the inconstancy of Cressida, Shakespeare's highlights the vulnerability of her predicament. She is the daughter of a traitor and as such, she is on precarious footing in Troy. Pandarus is her only relative that makes an appearance in Troy, and although he is a syphilitic bawd, he at least in jest realizes the difficulty of her position when he tells Troilus:

> She's a fool
> to stay behind her father. Let her to the Greeks, and so I'll

[80] Moulton, 16.
[81] Elton, 101, 143.
[82] According to Thomas, Henryson's *Testament* was part of Shakespeare's source material: "The title of the play (*Troilus and Cressida*) and Shakespeare's material for the love story are taken from Chaucer's poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, along with Henryson's sequel, *Testament of Cresseid,* which up to 1721 was printed as Chaucer's." Thomas, 23. Both Chaucer and Henryson's Trojan myths would have been readily available: between 1596-1602 new editions Chaucer, Henryson, and Caxton's Troy were published along with new works by Chapman (another of Shakespeare's sources), Chettle and Dekker. Bruster, 99.

tell her the next time I see her. (1.1.178-80)

A union, even as mistress, with Troilus, who is both a warrior and one of Priam's sons, would improve her situation. Even her acquiescence to Diomedes may be viewed as a reasonable course of action. Troilus had hardly made an effort to keep her in Troy—a silence that stands in stark contrast to his impassioned argument for Troy's retention of Helen. In the Greek camp, she has no protector: Calchas, her father, is despised as a traitor, even though he assisted the Greeks. While hardly conforming to a romantic ideal, Cressida appears to be a victim of the war doing her best to survive. As opposed to Cressida, Shakespeare does find fault with Helen. She is appears "vain, trivial and bored," and as such, she is very much part of the disease that infects the Greeks and Trojans.[83] However, it is not Helen but Pandarus that Shakespeare chooses as his poxy paradigm for Greco-Trojan values.

Pandarus' poxy curse on the audience is foreshadowed by Thersites' hope for a similar pestilential end for the Greeks:

> Vengeance on the whole camp!—or,
> rather, the Neapolitan bone-ache, for that methinks is the
> curse depending on those that war for a placket. (2.3.16-18)

Thersites desires that all of the Greek camp will suffer from syphilis—a reciprocal exchange for those that would war for a woman. He reduces the conflict to its essence: "All the argument is a whore and cuckold... Now the dry serpigo on the subject, and war and/ lechery confound all" (2.3.68, 70-71) (see Fig. 10). If Pandarus finds himself poxed for his sins and blames others as equals in sin, Thersites sees the bigger picture: he finds that all the war and its participants are poxy subject matter, and according to René Girard and Hugh Grady, his "theme about lechery and war is really the ultimate message of the

[83] Elton, 124.

play."[84] For the malcontent Greek, the conflict should only be an argument between Menelaus and Helen, the cuckold and the whore, but it is not. Instead, it has becomes "a/ good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death/ upon!" (2.3.68-70). Thersites connects the foolishness of public war over Menelaus and Paris' private discontent with the struggle between Diomedes and Troilus when he mocks the opponents on the battlefield.[85]

Thersites' mockery of the Menelaus-Helen-Paris conflict as well as the private Troilus-Cressida-Diomedes argument is a criticism of feminine inconstancy and masculine naivety, greed, emulation and calculation. In general, the Greeks, especially Achilles, Ulysses and Diomedes, are presented as cold, calculating and emulous. Trojans—such as Priam's sons Hector and Troilus—are in some ways very innocent, a trait which may have been viewed by the Elizabethan audience as equally undesirable.[86] In Thersites' opinion, the war, which was a public expression of a private affair, continues not only for that private lust but also for the envy, greed, fame, power and spoils that now motivate all participants. In other words, the despoiling of Helen has kindled an appetite in all the participants for the spoils of war whether they are gold, slaves or glory. Throughout the play, the war is evaluated and commodified. The general consensus is that it cannot be justified. The most complete examination of the

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[84] Girard, *Theater,* 150. Girard's assessment is echoed by Grady: "in the universe of the play Thersites is essentially right that all is lechery and war." Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 59.

[85] Thersites describes the duel between Paris and Menelaus to a bull-baiting with Paris as the dog and Menelaus as the "double-horned" bull (5.7.9-12). Earlier, Thersites narrated the first duel between the "young Trojan ass" Troilus and the "Greekish whoremasterly villain" fighting over "the dissembling luxurious drab," Cressida and her love-token, the sleeve. Thersites finds the sleeve endlessly amusing; his argument is built around a sleeveless pun, and later, he reduces the conflict to a contest between a fool, an asshole, a whore and a sleeve: "Hold thy whore, Grecian! Now for thy whore,/ Trojan! Now the sleeve, now the sleeve!" (5.4.22-23). The image emphasizes the sordid pettiness of the quarrel.

[86] Elton, 23.

cause and reason for war appears in the Trojan debate over Nestor's peace offering.[87] For example, Hector opens the debate by saying:

> Let Helen go.
> Since the first sword was drawn about this question,
> Every tithe soul 'mongst many thousand dismes
> Hath been as dear as Helen...
> If we have lost so many tenths of ours
> To guard a thing not ours, nor worth to us,
> Had it our name, the value of one ten,
> What merit's in that reason which denies
> The yielding of her up? (2.2.16-24)

Hector adds up the costs of keeping Helen in a tithe of souls and finds "she is not worth what she doth cost/ The keeping" (2.2.50-51). When Troilus argues in favor of the war with Hector, he appeals to emotion rather than reason, which elicits Helenus' remark that he "bites so sharp at reasons" because he is "empty of them" (2.2.32-33). Even mad Cassandra sees the war in a trope of commodities and goods rendered; she likens her cries with a "moiety of that mass moan to come" when all of Troy falls to support Paris' lust (2.2.106).

Thersites is one of the Greeks who also recognizes the war to be foolish and wasteful, hence his crudely reductive deduction that the war is for "a placket." Thersites, like a verse satirist, sees the excessive and/or degenerate appetites of individuals creating an unbalanced society. As a result, he curses Patroclus with behavior-related diseases including syphilis:

> Now the rotten diseases of the south, the guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs, load o'gravel i' th' back, lethargies, cold palsies, raw eyes, dirt-rotten livers, wheezing lungs, bladders full of impostume, sciaticas, lime-kilns i'th' palm, incurable bone-ache, and the rivelled fee-simple of the

[87] Priam tells the princes about Nestor's offer at the beginning of 2.2; the rest of the scene—more than two hundred lines—is dedicated to a debate on reason for keeping Helen or returning her to the Greeks.

> tetter, take and take again such preposterous discoveries.
> (5.1.17-23)

Thersites describes Patroclus as Achilles' "male vartlet" and "his masculine whore;" furthermore, he tells the audience that "with too much blood and too little brain, these/ two may run mad" (5.1.15, 17, 47-48). Thersites explains Patroclus and Achilles' behavior according to Renaissance humoral theory: an excess of sanguine humor, or blood, was believed to be the cause of venery. Patroclus and Achilles' desires are excessive and bisexual; in addition to their relationship, Achilles loves Polyxena (one of Queen Hecuba of Troy's daughters). Patroclus' pursuit of appetite is unbounded; Thersites says that he:

> will give him anything for intelligence of this whore [Cressida];
> the parrot will not do more for an almond than he for a
> commodious drab." (5.1.38-39, 5.2.190-192)

Thersites realizes that this sort of excessive and irrational subjugation to appetites lies at the heart of the conflict: "Lechery, lechery! Still wars and lech-/ ery! Nothing else holds fashion" (5.2.192-193). He is reiterating his argument from 2.3—that lechery is the cause of the war and that the appropriate treatment for these "incontinent vartlets" is a syphilis infection in the form of a "burning devil" (5.1. 94, 5.2.193).

Shakespeare's pox theme comes to a head in the closing lines of *Troilus and Cressida,* when Pandarus, who is unaware of both Hector's brutal death in battle and Cressida's new liaison with Diomedes, encounters Troilus. Troilus, perhaps overwrought by events, turns on Pandarus with a curse: "Ignomy and shame/ Pursue thy life and live aye with thy name" (5.11.33-34). In these lines, Shakespeare dramatized the appropriation of Pandarus' name as synonymous with bawdry. Pandarus equates this curse with his own pox infection, describing Troilus' attack as "A goodly medicine for

my aching bones" (5.11.35). Perhaps unwittingly, Pandarus reinforces the ignominious aspects of his brokering by associating the pain of Troilus' rejection with his syphilis. At this point, Pandarus turns into something of a misanthrope. He is suffering from his immoral choices—in the form of his social ostracism and his pox infection. Rather than assuming a penitent attitude, Pandarus turns on the audience and implicates them as bawds and sinners, calling them, "Good traders in the flesh" (5.11.44). Not only are the crowd bawds, Pandarus imagines they are grotesquely syphilitic, saying: "your eyes half out, weep out at Pandar's fall./ Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,/ though not for me yet for your aching bones" (5.11.46-48). Pandarus' suggests that the audience, whose eyes are almost destroyed by syphilis, should sympathize with his plight, implying that they are equally poxy-guilty. If they cannot commiserate with his pain, they can at least groan over their own similar syphilitic sin and suffering. Pandarus' poxy address closes with his wish to pox the already poxy audience:

> Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,
> Some two months hence my will shall here be made.
> It should be now, but that my fear is this:
> Some galléd goose of Winchester would hiss.
> Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
> And at that time bequeath to you my diseases.
> (5.11.49-54)

In the final lines of the play, Pandarus, like Timon, foresees his own death. Timon, however, dies because he is sick of the world; Pandarus will die in some two months as a result of his pox. In keeping with this misanthropic stance, Pandarus has become extremely cynical: he imagines he will sweat out the rest of his life in pox cures, and upon his death he will bequeath his syphilis to the audience.[88]

[88] There are some interesting readings on Pandarus' reference to the Winchester goose. It is generally accepted that this term denotes a poxed prostitute—the reference being to the large number of brothels and

In *Troilus,* it is uncertain whether Pandarus is really syphilitic; is his affliction physical or ideological? Similarly, it seems likely that when Pandarus addresses the poxy audience, he is not referring to a physical infection. It is not *trepenoma palladium* that has infected Pandarus' audience, but rather, a cultural-moral poxing. If one reads Pandarus' poxy attack in concrete pathological terms, his argument is not convincing; why would one bequeath poxy people more pox? Instead Pandarus is presenting an ideological disease; he is displacing his guilt by implicating the audience in similar sins. According to C.C. Barfoot, "*Troilus and Cressida* suggests that we trade in selves, just as we trade in words."[89] The audience's syphilis reflects their culpability in taking part in corrupt or diseased transactions—sexual or otherwise. His bequest of ideological syphilis after his death is tantamount to an implicative statement: he, as Pandarus-pander, is the embodiment of corrupt exchange and his bequest through the ages to Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience is that they will carry on his work and that they are physically-ideologically as poxed as he. Susan Sontag says that "any disease that is treated as a mystery and acutely enough feared will be felt to be morally if not literally, contagious."[90] Pandarus' infection and curse represents a Shakespearean version of this concept: behavior, rather than biological disease, in systems and personalities has the ability to generate disease or physical symptoms of disease. In *Troilus,* the disease-contagion-behavior is excessive appetite, and the basic paradigm for this argument—that excessive sexuality leads to effeminacy and the pox—was suggested by earlier literary characters, such as Marston's Tubrio.

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prostitutes that flourished on the Bankside under the Bishop of Winchester's jurisdiction. Dawson reads this as a topical reference, placing the production in a public theater in this south bank location, rather than the Inns of Court, see Dawson, 233.

[89] C.C. Barfoot, "Praise us as we are Tasted," *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 39.1 (1988), 56.

[90] Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," 6.

According to Bruster, the several versions of the Troy myth that appeared in the late Elizabethan era reveal "London's penchant for stressing the role of appetite in the Troy story," a point which he finds "most clearly revealed in *Troilus and Cressida* in the role played by commercial and domestic metaphors."[91] Bruster finds that Shakespeare may have begun with a convention (Troy as an appetitive environment), but he develops the theme into an analysis of the city's flawed economic system:

> It is attempting to adopt such a view, reading the world of *Troilus and Cressida* as Thersites would read it, as a world thrown into war by lechery. Shakespeare would find in contemporary satire the tools and pattern for such a dramatic morality. But there is some evidence that Shakespeare's complaint, in this play, goes beyond the moral to the systemic. The play admits and condemns the fallibility of the *humanum genus*, yet refers again and again to an economic system that apparently distorts human relationships and actively encourages the lapses in morality once ascribed to the machinations of abstract sins and commodities.[92]

Bruster's vision of *Troilus* as an exploration of a flawed economic system can be taken a step further, if the theme is developed in the context of its yield: the pox. Syphilis is the correlate of excessive appetites. One might go so far as to say that the pox is an exemplum of the appetites fueling the war in *Troilus,* and Pandarus' body is the canvas on which the audience sees painted the physical-moral ravages of a society dominated by its desires. Appetites/desires are commodified: "Love and war become commercial endeavors, and relations—social, political, and personal—take place on the material plane," and this process is poxed, faulty and degenerate.[93] The final twist in this progression takes shape in Pandarus' bequest, in which he implicates the Elizabethan

[91] Bruster, 99.
[92] Bruster, 117.
[93] Bruster, 103.

audience in the same pockified ideology of appetite to which he, Troy and Greece have fallen victim.

Shakespeare's examination of the pox as a correlate of diseased and excessive appetites constitutes an in-depth examination of those appetites and the ideologies that people build to support them. Shakespeare introduces a concept in which commodified ideologies have poxy, corrosive effects. Rather than *describing* something in general, metaphorical terms, Shakespeare *inscribes* syphilis upon what he must have perceived as consumptive ideologies. Pandarus' poxy body—real or imagined—serves only to highlight the corruption of his pockified mind and his corrosive effect on the Trojan society. Pandarus' bequest of syphilis to the Elizabethan audience is not so much a medical curse as recognition that they, too, are fellow partakers in a diseased ideology and members of the appetitive bawd-and-broker world.

Greed and Prodigality: Timon, Pox and the Gold Standard

> This [gold] will make
> Black, white; foul, fair; wrong, right;
> Base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant.
> (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.28-30)

> Gold is a pox which destroys the
> sexual/spiritual health of those who harbor
> it.[94]

> He who eats without knowledge kills his food,
> and his food kills him.[95]

Timon of Athens, like *Troilus and Cressida,* is very much concerned with corrupt evaluation and exchange. Both plays present characters that turn misanthropic as a

[94] Gordon Williams, "An Elizabethan Disease," *Trivium* 4 (1971), 44.
[95] *Anucasanaparvan* (Book XIII of the *Mahabharata*, 5831), quoted in, Marcel Mauss, *The Gift,* trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen and West, Ltd.: 1970), 56.

reaction to an experience of profound discontent. The characters' dissatisfaction is the result of a belief that the illusions perpetrated by their societies are false. Scholars have commented on the clash between conceptions of traditional, chivalrous and modern, acquisitive societies. A.D. Nuttall, for example, urges that "a kind of admiration should coexist with our disapproval of Timon," since he finds, in both Alicbades and Timon's betrayal by Athens, themes which are "concerned with a sudden blow struck against and older, aristocratic order."[96] Gordon Williams says that Timon's "impulsive, expansive way, puts him as out of step with his Athenian peers as Antony of *Antony and Cleopatra* is with the new Roman power."[97] In all these incidents, chivalrous, martial characters—such as Hector, Timon and Antony—encounter, and are confounded by, their devious and capitalistic modern counterparts, in the form of Achilles, Athenian society and Octavius.[98] C.C. Barfoot's assessment that "the nature of transaction lies at the very core of the problem of human relationships... in *Troilus and Cressida,*" can also be just as easily be applied to *Timon of Athens*.[99] Barfoot finds that in *Troilus and Cressida,* "the prevalence of mercantile metaphors that runs throughout the play... suggests that we are all traders in our relationships, and, as victims and perpetrators, susceptible to the inevitable treachery that trade brings in its wake."[100] Timon is a culpable victim of the clash between obsolete chivalric ideals and the acquisitive values of an emerging capitalist society.

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[96] A.D. Nuttall, *Timon of Athens* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 72.
[97] Williams, 141.
[98] Williams argues that Shakespeare firmly places Timon within the pre-modern, martial tradition by having "the Athenian capitalists turn [to him] for protection from the invader in the last act." Williams, 141-142.
[99] Barfoot, 141.
[100] Barfoot, 46.

Timon's exact source of discontent is his disappointment with processes of exchange in Athenian society. He subscribes to what Marcel Mauss called "the archaic form of exchange—the gift and the return gift;" however, Athenian society no longer espouses this standard and for his generosity he receives nothing beyond deception and empty flattery.[101] Timon's discontent finds expression through pockified language which corresponds to his treatment and serves as an appropriate form of metaphoric expression in which "consuming physical disease, such as plague or pox, functions beautifully as a metaphor for destructive personal hates or civic immorality."[102] Even more specifically, Timon's syphilitic outburst in 4.3 suggests a response to deception and corrupt exchange. Timon's pox metaphors work on several levels, but at their center is Timon's equation of Athenian ideological corruption with a syphilitic infection and the belief that gold and desire, as much as syphilis itself, carry with them the consuming attributes of the pox.[103]

Timon, like Pandarus, is in some ways very much responsible for the environment in which he lives. Timon functions as sign, symptom and victim of society as he both fostered and is victimized by Athenian greed and parasitism:

> Timon appears as the symptomatic centre point of the society to which he belongs. He is the patron of sycophants, the host to parasites. Without Timon, his false friends would have nowhere to go, no one with whom to be what they are. He generates the world in which he and they live.[104]

Although *Troilus* and *Timon* are set in the ancient world, they are satirical and as such exhibit an intensely topical nature. *Timon's* triad of misanthropic and/or satirical

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[101] Mauss, 45.
[102] Rubinstein, 71.
[103] Gordon Williams notices but does not explore Timon's equation of gold with the pox in "Disease," 44.
[104] John Jowett, introduction, *Timon of Athens,* William Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 40.

characters—Timon, Apemantus, and to a far lesser extent, the Clown—echo Pandarus and Thersites' use of the pox metaphor as an expression of their discontent. Timon's poxy language proves to be more than this. Sontag compares Elizabethan and twentieth-century disease metaphors:

> Unlike the Elizabethan [disease] metaphors—which complain of some general aberration or public calamity that is, in consequence, dislocating to individuals—the modern metaphors [relating to specific diseases] suggest a profound disequilibrium between individual and society"[105]

In most cases, Sontag is right; early modern literary instances of disease often signify a corrupt society or body politic, as they do, for example, in the Henry IV and V plays. However, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens* both push beyond this. Timon, as a misanthrope, attributes disease to the commonwealth as a result of his equation of his personal calamity with a general, public corruption. However, Timon's poxy vision and pockified language highlight his misanthropy and separate him from society, thus representing the disequilibrium between the individual and society that Sontag associates with modern disease metaphors. Most scholars approach pox references in *Timon of Athens* from a medical-historical point of view, but *Timon of Athens* should suggest more than this.[106] The play represents a further progression of the pox metaphor—one that Shakespeare had begun to develop in *Troilus and Cressida*—in which he examines the disease as a linguistic infection in relation to his ongoing exploration of the corrosive underbelly of early modern society's struggle with readjusting notions of value in philosophical, social and pecuniary matters.

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[105] Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," 74.
[106] For a recent traditional reading of the pox metaphors in *Timon of Athens,* see Louis F. Qualtiere and William W. E. Slights, "Contagion and Blame in Early Modern England: The Case of the French Pox." *Literature and Medicine* 22.1 (2003), 1-24.

Following Timon's conversion to misanthropy and shortly after his pockified, diatribic injunctions to Phrynia and Timandra, Apemantus, in response to Timon's railing, says, "There is no leprosy, but what thou speak'st" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.358). At this point, *Timon of Athens's* pox references diverge from "the familiar metaphors of infection."[107] In what is perhaps Apemantus' most insightful line: Shakespeare reveals that disease does not exist in the play outside of Timon's words. Apemantus is not the only character who grasps the nature of Timon's linguistic infection. In response to Timon's pockified assault, Phrynia curses Timon: "Thy lips rot off" (4.3.64).[108] Phrynia is counter-cursing Timon as she hopes that his poxy imprecations will infect him. If syphilis has become a linguistic disease, then Timon, Shakespeare's most pestilential speaker, is linguistically infected with this form of poxy consumption that serves as an expression of his profound discontent with the economic system of his world and his equation of this system with social degeneracy in the form of traitorous parasitic flatterers. Timon's pox is even more ideological than that of Pandarus. Whereas the propensity for a physical infection exists with Pandarus, Timon's disease serves as a metaphor only and is removed from any incidence of biological infection in the play. Timon's most syphilitic outbursts, directed toward Timandra and Phrynia, are never substantiated by any indication that they *are* poxed but instead reveal Timon's misogynistic conception that as devouring, dishonest women who are representative of Athenian society (and the society's appetites) they *should* pox, and should be poxed. As a result, the prostitutes, like the only other females in the play, the Amazonian masquers, represent a projection of Timon's psyche—and in their case, his fantasy of destroying his

[107] Arnold, Weinstein, "Afterward: Infection as Metaphor," *Literature and Medicine,* 22.1 (2003), 103.
[108] See Williams' connotation of rot with "venereal disease, combining notions of physical and moral corruption." Williams, *Dictionary,* vol. 3, 1172.

homeland. It is in this sense that the pox exists in the world of the play only through Timon's act of giving it life through his railing.[109] Timon is different from Shakespeare's other poxy misanthropic characters, such as Jacques and Pandarus, in that his pox does not have a specific sexual aegis. For Pandarus, a bawd, and Jacques, a former libertine, Shakespeare refers to their specifically sexualized histories as a source for their misanthropy. For Timon, syphilis has become what it had come to describe: it is a disease which is spoken, a disease of language, and a disease of the psyche closely allied to misanthropy.

Timon's poxy expressions are a symptom of his misanthropy, and Shakespeare uses them to develop "a meditation of financial and emotional bankruptcy."[110] In reference to late Tudor times, Maria O'Neill discusses the influence of economic hardship on language:

> The two main bugbears of the late Tudor period, namely, the unstable coinage and the fluctuations of the cloth trade, furnished the debate on language with a series of tropes. The fact that the linguistic usage was discussed in monetary and economic terms marks a fundamental shift within the social framework, as a human institution, parallel in its operations to those of the marketplace and the mint.[111]

By the early Jacobean period, the Tudor economic hardships had probably become a nostalgic memory in light of James I's excessive spending.[112] The worsening economic

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[109] The fool and Apemantus also employ pox imagery in the play, but their use of the disease is far less involved than Timon's. In 2.2, the fool, in his conventional Renaissance dramatic role as entertainer and sage, makes the image an overtly poxy one. When the servants attempt to divert themselves by mocking the fool and enquiring about his mistress, he tells them, "She's e'en setting on water to scald such chickens as you are" (2.2.71). The Fool's insult can be read to suggest that she is going to pox or scald such gulls or chickens. I will discuss Apemantus' pox imagery further into the chapter.

[110] Duncan-Jones, 183.

[111] Maria O'Neill, "Of Clothing and Coinage," *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature,* ed. Mike Pincombe (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 166.

[112] Some critics equate Timon's bounteous nature with contemporary conceptions of James I; for example, see, Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of Bounty:' *Timon of Athens,* Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power,"

situation probably continued to fuel the market for another popular Tudor convention: complaints concerning the degeneracy of the age. From the opening of *Timon of Athens*, the audience encounters a synthesis of the languages of economics and degeneracy—both of which are described in pockified terms.

In the opening of the play, the exchange between the poet and the painter introduces the theme that the world is a degenerate place. The painter sees the world degenerating as it grows older: it "weaks at it grows" (1.1.4). Shakespeare borrows several images from both verse and prose satire to develop an image of a degenerate commodified society. An indication of the level of corruption can be found in Apemantus' query, "who lives that is not corrupt?" (1.2.127). While Apemantus' words cannot always be taken at face value, in this case they ring true against the overwhelming backdrop of images in *Timon of Athens* of cannibalism, corruption and the consumptive pathology of syphilis which steadily erodes the Athenian paradigm that gold makes the man.

From the first scene of the play, Apemantus prepares the audience for a commentary on the poxy degeneracy of the consumptive Athenian society. As Timon's dinner guests gather in rapacious anticipation, Apemantus meets them with a poxy curse:

> So, so; there! Aches contract and starve your supple
> joints! That there should be small love amongst these sweet knaves,
> and all this courtesy! The strain of man's bred into baboon and monkey.
> (1.1.248-251)

Amongst the ebb and flow of Timon's dinner guests, Apemantus flings his curse, describing the guests as corrupt, degenerate and consumed by their sins. Apemantus' poxy curse is conceptually elliptical in nature: he hopes that the syphilis will render them

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Shakespeare Quarterly, 38 (1987) 34-57, or Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 165-168.

into a form that reflects their true, poxy natures. He sees Timon's guests as degenerate and he hopes that the pox will attack their bodies contorting them in such a manner so that they resemble primates—the creatures that along with goats, early modern English writers most often associated with lasciviousness.[113]

The relationship between degeneracy and the pox would have been recognized not only for its concomitant image of degenerate moral behavior, but since syphilis was recognized to be a new disease it suggested a degenerate world cursed with a new punishment from God for the sins of man.[114] In *Timon of Athens* this ideology is expanded to explain that the degenerate parasites that plague Timon as well as Timon, himself: both are the guilty products of their corrupt environment and the pox is an example and a dominant image in the dissemination of this ideology.

Athenians as Rampant and Cannibalistic Consumers

> You shall ha' some will swallow
> A melting heire, as you *Dutch*/ Will pills of butter.
> (*Volpone,* 1.1.41-42)[115]
>
> "I never tasted Timon in my life" (*Timon of Athens* 3.2.70)

If *Troilus and Cressida* represents an early example or response to *Every Man Out of his Humor*'s misanthropes, John Jowett suggests a continuing discussion between Jonson and Shakespeare on the stage by comparing *Volpone* and *Timon of Athens's* interest in obsessions with gold.[116] Timon and Volpone feature in the same argument, but they are on opposite sides of the spectrum. Volpone retains gold, which he collects from gulls and

[113] Williams, *Dictionary,* vol. 2, 900-902.
[114] The sentiment is almost as old as recorded Western thought—Greek myths held that the first age of man was golden and subsequent ages were increasingly base materials, an ideology that is paralleled in Genesis as well.
[115] Ben Jonson, *Volpone and Other Plays,* ed. Lorna Hutson (London: Penguin 1998).
[116] Jowett, *Timon,* 7.

fops who hope to win his inheritance, while Timon expels his wealth.[117] In other words, if Volpone is one who uses other people, Timon is one who is used. Despite Apemantus' wishes, Timon's dinner guests are not consumed; instead they consume, not only the meal that Timon sets before them, but his estate as well. In an allegory that spans the course of the play, Timon is devoured by his flatterer-friends in Shakespeare's most detailed illustration of the relationship between the corrosive acquisition and the body-centered episteme. Throughout the play, money and exchange are central to Timon's life and language. At first, Timon is unaware that his body and estate are viewed as a banquet by his parasitic friends.[118] Apemantus sees things for what they are when he declares in response to Timon's invitation to dine with him, "No, I eat not lords" (1.1.206). Apemantus' deliberate misunderstanding of the invitation is the first of several cannibal images in which parasites devour Timon's conflated body and estate. The first lord provides an image of the diners feeding off Timon's bounty/body: "Come, shall we in, and taste Lord Timon's bounty" (1.1.275). When they do eat, Apemantus sees the dinner in as a cannibals' feast: "What a number of men eats Timon, and he see 'em/ not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood,/ and all the madness is, he cheers them up too," or when he tells Timon that his friends drink his (future) lachrymose hardships: "Thou weep'st to make them drink, Timon" (1.2.39-41, 1.2.97).

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[117] For example, compare Volpone's praise of gold (*Volpone* 1.1.1-27) to Timon's image of the destructive nature of gold (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.26-44). From divergent perspectives, both characters view gold as having the same attributes. Volpone says of his saint, gold, "Who can get thee/ He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise" (*Volpone* 1.1.27), while Timon's focuses on the negative effects of the metal's social currency, "This yellow slave/ Will... bless th'accursed" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.34-35).

[118] The image of the prodigal body being cannibalized by parasite flatterers also appears in *Volpone*, such as when Mosca says that Volpone does not "devoure/ Soft prodigals" (1.1.40-41) or Volpone says that his scheme is "better then rob churches, yet:/ Or fat, by eating (once a mon'th) a man" (1.5.91-92).

Apemantus refuses to dine with Timon because he will not submit to Timon's end of the bargain: "I scorn thy meat; 'twould choke me, for I should ne'er/ flatter thee" (1.2.37-38). Apemantus reveals the hidden exchange implicit in Timon's invitation: Timon feeds many with his body-estate in return for flattery and dissimulating adoration that feed his ego. Timon turns misanthropic when his flattering friends have fed of him but offer no reciprocal support in his need, and it is at this time he realizes his friends have been feasting on him. Like Shylock's and Antonio's contract in *Merchant of Venice*, Timon sees his body being butchered to pay his debts; he tells his creditors: "cleave me to the girdle… Cut my heart in sums… Tell out my blood… Tear me, take me, and the gods fall upon you!" (*Timon of Athens* 3.4 86, 88, 93).[119]

Timon's Descent into Misanthropy

Timon of Athens is linked to *King Lear* by "the strongest affinities of plot, style, and philosophical disillusionment."[120] Lear turns misanthropic when he discovers a betrayal, similar to Timon's, in the insincerity of (two of) his daughters. Timon finds that his relationships, instead of being symbiotic, are parasitic and his body-estate is the host. During Lear's misanthropic stage, his Fool also introduces the pox to complement his diatribes, but Lear is able to abandon his misanthropic stance and rediscover grace via the love of Cordelia and Kent. Paradoxically, Timon does have the opportunity to discover grace, through the friendship of Alcibades or the faithful support of Flavius, but instead

[119] In *The Merchant of Venice,* the commodification of Antonio's body is not figurative but literal: his pound of flesh is the collateral that Shylock requires if Bassanio's ventures fail. Timon's offer of his body is literal but only in the sense that he finally sees the body-estate conflation.
[120] Jowett, *Timon,* 8.

he prefers to embrace his misanthropy—a humor which the Renaissance audience would find almost as undesirable to the commonwealth as his former prodigality.[121]

As a misanthrope, Timon embraces his hate as completely as he once embraced prodigality, or as Apemantus says: "the middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the/ extremity of both ends" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.307-308). Timon's intensity is characteristic of obsessive-compulsive behavior. His actions are contraposed by those of Apemantus. Apemantus is what might be considered a professional misanthrope in the same way the Carlo Buffone/Charles Chester was a professional oral satirist. It is Apemantus that calls Timon's behavior into question when he says, "When thou wast in thy gilt and thy per-/ fume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity; in thy rags thou/ know'st none, but art despised for the contrary" (4.3.308-311).[122] Apemantus is correct; in both the prodigal and misanthropic stages of his life, Timon is an excessive and foolish consumer. In the first stage, he spends prodigiously for the edification of his false friends and for his own vanity. After he is broken, he assumes an almost satyr-like existence, living in the forest, dressed in rough clothes or hides and railing upon any who come his way—he, like Jacques of *As You Like It*, can be said to consume his own hatred and spew it back into the world. Apemantus' grace foreshadows Timon's future behavior: "Rich men sin, and I eat root" (1.2.68).[123] Timon and Apemantus' rage is a mixture of outrage and bitterness, but where Apemantus remains even-keeled in his disdain, Timon is not

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[121] "From an early modern point of view, misanthropy was a beast-like state" Jowett, *Timon*, 29. Timon excuses his beast-like state by accusing all men of being beasts in a world in which everyone preys on their more vulnerable neighbor: "All thy safety were remotion, and thy defense absence. What beast couldst/ thou be that were not subject to a beast? And what a beast art thou already" (4.3.341-344).

[122] I suspect that by "curiosity," Apemantus means "undue niceness or fastidiousness as to food, clothing, matters of taste and behavior" (*OED*).

[123] Apemantus' misanthropy can be compared to Timon's future misanthropy through this line. In Apemantus' prayer, he figuratively "eats root" as opposed to Timon who, in 4.3 literally eats a root according to the stage directions. This is a physical example of the difference between Apemantus' philosophical and Timon's applied approaches to misanthropy.

only excessive in his hate, but also in his prodigality. When he discovers the hoard of hidden gold, he returns to excessive spending; he kindly pays Flavius and liberally patronizes not only Alcibades but also, Phrynia, Timandra, and even the bandits.[124]

Timon and the Consumption of Pox and Gold

Timon's funding of the prostitutes in the hopes that they will carry out poxy biological warfare crystallizes his conception of misanthropy, the commodification of society, and the pox.[125] David Hawkes has argued that during the early modern period "financial value" was first separated from gold bullion, and as "an independent source" it became part of a larger conflation which he has calls "the autonomy of value."[126] Early modern people discovered that if signs, such as the economic conception of value, are separated from the things that they describe such as gold, then value and language, which assigns value, can also experience the same mutability. It is this mutability of language that allows Shakespeare the opportunity to experiment with applying the poxy consumption of syphilitic disease to the rampant consumption of Timon's consumerist society.

Timon associates the consuming ravages of the pox with monetary consumption. As early as 1589, Thomas Nashe intimated knowledge of this very conception in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* when he described that "the Courte is as it were a devouring

[124] It is widely debated whether Timon may also fund his former beneficiaries, the poet and painter. While he says "I'll give you gold... I'll give you gold enough" (5.1.91, 94) and "There's gold; you came for gold" (5.1.102), he also says at the end "You are an alchemist, make gold of that" (5.1.104). Timon may be flinging gold at them—assaulting them with what they are seeking—or it may be rocks or other material.
[125] For a discussion on Timon as a proponent of pockified biological warfare see Qualtiere and Slights, 1-24, and Williams, *Revolution,* 132-133.
[126] David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 22.

Gulfe of gold, and the consumption of coyne."[127] Timon's conflation of monetary and sexual corrupt consumption is cause for Shakespeare's longest and most pocky diatribes.[128] Several critics have discussed the central importance of the pox in *Timon of Athens*; however, most scholars have focused on the medical/historical aspect of syphilis within the play.[129] There is more than this to Timon's poxy diatribes. For Timon, syphilis serves as a linguistic correlative for his friends' parasitic consumption of his body-estate. As he was consumed financially and emotionally, he appropriates pockified language to imagine a similar consumption of his countrymen, but Timon, forever the excessive consumer, cannot himself mediate his response, and his syphilitic language overwhelms him.

Timon begins to become pockified when he serves his final banquet of warm water to his former flatterers.[130] Timon turns on his guests, verbally abusing them and offering the threat of physical violence, and his diatribe offers the promise of his future poxy verbal violence:

> Plague incident to men,
> Your potent and infectious fevers heap
> On Athens ripe for stroke! Thou cold sciatica,
> Cripple our senators, that their limbs may halt
> As lamely as their manners! Lust, and liberty,
> Creep in the minds and marrows of our youth,
> That 'gainst the stream of virtue they may strive,
> And drown themselves in riot! Itches, blains,
> Sow all th' Athenian bossoms, and their crop
> Be general leprosy! Breath infect breath,

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[127] Nashe, 33.
[128] Williams discusses the early modern conception of syphilis as consumption in *Revolution,* 135.
[129] See Aubrey C. Kail, *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare* (Balgowlah, NSW: Williams and Wilkins, 1986), 4-86; Greg W. Bentley, *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in "Troilus and Cressida," "Measure for Measure", and "Timon of Athens"* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994) and Williams, *Revolution*, 129-143.
[130] Timon's banquet is more than likely influenced by the tradition of the antifeast. The antifeast was early modern practice which offered an image of conspicuous and wasteful consumption. See Nuttall, 83-85.

> That their society, as their friendship, may
> Be merely poison! (4.1.21-32)

Timon's curse of halting sciatica, lust and liberty (in the marrow), itches, blains, and general leprosy all foreshadow his future poxy diatribes. The sciatica and the halt often refer to the syphilitic attack on bones and joint; the itches, blains and leprosy all suggest the many skin diseases that doctors confuse or equate with the pox, and lust and liberty suggest the immorality and licentiousness so often associated with epidemic sexual disease.

In 4.3, Timon cultivates an increasingly pathogenic mode of communication. Timon, like Ulysses, employs sixteenth-century medical theory to establish relationships between anarchy and disease. In language very similar to that of Fracastoro's explanation of poxy infectious miasmas brought forth from the earth by an unfortunate planetary conjunction, Timon hopes that the "blessed breeding sun" will "draw from the earth/ Rotten humidity" to "infect the air" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.1-3). Like Ulysses' speech on degree in *Troilus* (1.3), he reveals the conception of a world gone topsy-turvy, where the traditional hierarchy is in disorder: "raise me this beggar, and deny't that lord,/ The senator shall bear contempt hereditary,/ The beggar native honor" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.1-3). Timon reveals a fear of the modern economy; he blames the environment of flattery and sycophancy on the grasping individualism fostered by contemporary social mobility: "say this man's a flatterer? If one be,/ So are they all; for every grise of fortune/ Is smoothed by that below" (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.15-17). Timon's concerns with the state of the world, and the source of his discontent, increasingly find expression in disease imagery. What Timon does not realize is that his fascination with the power to

translate and transmit his discontent in the form of poxy diatribes inexorably comes to represent not so much an expression of his animosity but an infection of his psyche.

As Timon progresses toward his poxy attack on humanity, he comes to see his betrayal by his friends as a symptom of a society in which gold is a disease. Gold is symbolic of all corrupt exchanges that infect the Athenian society. As already noted, Williams has pointed out the transformative power of gold. In *Timon of Athens*, gold becomes the signifier of the degenerative force within society. When the traditional hierarchy and values are removed social anarchy occurs, and in the ensuing power vacuum the man who has gold has both power and wealth but also a host of flatterers that seek to raise their fortunes, at the peril of his own. Another subject of fear and disgust is that a man's wealth and monetary credit come to equal his value as an individual—a point that Timon touches upon this in his diatribe against social mobility in 4.3.

The correlation between monetary and sexual commodities and commodification is further established when the lords' servants come to call in Timon's debts. Apemantus and the Fool confront the servants, and Apemantus describes them as "usurers'/ men, bawds between gold and want" (*Timon of Athens* 2.2.62-63). Apemantus establishes the servants' roles as panders of a corrupt sexual exchange.[131] The parasitic lords have already devoured the majority of Timon's body-estate and wish to collect the last scraps. Apemantus and the Fool equate the servants with bawds because their business is unjust, unclean and dishonorable since they serve as conduits between their corrupt masters' want and Timon's remaining gold.

[131] Nuttall identifies three mediums of corrupt exchange: moral ingratitude, sexual vice and usury. See Nuttall, 104.

Timon's madness, misanthropy and poxy world vision finally come to a head when he discovers the hoard of gold in the wilderness and has the means to enact his revenge on mankind. Where *Lear* briefly swerves toward a bitter poxy world vision and Pandarus only associates the pox with his commodified, bawd-and-tapster world in the final lines of *Troilus and Cressida*, Timon's extended association between a corrupt economic system and the pox coincides with the play's climax. After he curses his final dinner party guest with pox and leprosy, he is visited by Alcibades accompanied by Phrynia and Timandra. Timon's misanthropy seems to be equaled only by his misogyny, and he sees Alcibades' consorts as far more lethal than the soldier's sword: "This fell whore of thine/ Hath in her more destruction than thy sword,/ For all her cherubim look" (4.3.61-63). Timon then evokes images of a diseased contractual agreement. Timon gives Phrynia and Timandra gold, he expects agents of biological warfare in return. In what Williams describes as a parodic vision of Danae, Timon orders the courtesans to "Hold up, you sluts,/ Your aprons mountant" to receive his shower of gold (4.3.137).[132] Rather than the fruitful union between Zeus and Danae, Timon hopes to instill in them his conception of destruction.[133] The contract begins with Timon giving the women gold—he expects destruction in return. He realizes that a contract with loose women is not terribly binding—as their condition is inherently untrustworthy: "you are not oathable, Although, I know, you'll swear, terribly swear into strong shudders and to heavenly

[132] Williams, *Revolution,* 133.

[133] In the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period, it would appear that the consumptive nature of gold and sexually transmitted disease was joined in the image of a debased Danae which combined sexual seduction and financial temptation. See for example: Greene's argument that women "be like *Danae* that will admit no lover but such as *Jupiter.*" Robert Greene, *Tullies Love* (London, 1589), B2^{r}. Hind later uses Danae to create an image of the wantonness of women which—in a Greene-inspired argument—cannot be coerced into chastity: "Danae would neither regard the watch that attended upon her, nor the brazen castell that warded her but became more loose of both lips and lap." John Hind, *Eliosto Libidinosto* (London, 1606), C3^{r}.

agues th' immortal gods that hear you" (4.3.137-140).[134] It seems that Timon, with his characteristic misogyny, conflates the prostitutes' false sexuality with dishonesty and venereal disease. As a result, he works his deal to take advantage of their faithless natures rather than opposing them: "Spare your oaths;/ I'll trust to your conditions, be whores still" (4.3.140-141). Timandra and Phrynia fulfil his expectations with their refrain: "Believe't, that we'll do any thing for gold (4.3.151).

Timon equates the dishonesty implicit in early modern conceptions of prostitution with dishonesty inherent in all people. As a result, in addressing Timandra and Phrynia, he expects them to live to a certain, extremely low standard, hence his injunction: "be whores still" (4.3.141). In fact, he uses the line some fifty lines earlier in a similar context:

> Be a whore still; they love thee not that use thee; give them
> Diseases, leaving with thee their lust. Make use of thy salt hours;
> Season the slaves for tubs and baths; bring down rose-cheeked
> Youth to the tub-fast and the diet. (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.84-87)

At this point, when Timon is just beginning his poxy diatribe, he imagines Phrynia and Timandra's dishonest profession/natures will allow them to do further wrong. Timon's viewpoint is that prostitution is a corrupt exchange. In this exchange, he instructs that the prostitutes should "disease" the patrons for their lust. He conflates alimentary appetitive images with syphilis to remind the audience of the universal relationship of excessive appetite and corruption. Using their salt hours, or lustful times, they should season their customers with disease and bring them to the tub-fast and diet of a medical regimen.

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[134] Timon's faith in Phrynia and Timandra's faithlessness calls to mind the (arguably hypocritical) standpoint of Shakespeare's persona in the Sonnets and Troilus, who "remain constant despite time," even though they do not or cannot "expect constancy in others." Kenneth Muir, "Troilus and Cressida," *Aspects of Shakespeare's Problem Plays,* eds. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 97.

Timon's lust and sexualization of destruction contribute to his propensity for pox images.[135] If any seek to convert the prostitutes, Timon suggests that they too can be brought down through their appetites and poxed: "And he whose pious breath seeks to convert you, Be strong in whore, allure him, burn him up,/ Let your close fire predominate his smoke, And be no turncoats" (4.3.142-145) (see Fig. 11).[136]

Timon's disappointment manifests itself in a general misanthropic disdain and distrust for all men. Timon finds that the root of all mankind's evils can be found with people's failure to control their appetites and their willingness to dissimulate to sate their appetites. Timandra and Phrynia sell their bodies for gold. Timon seems to believe that their exchange implies love but delivers sex and false affection. Even those that attempt to dissuade them from their profession will fall victim to their desires. In all cases, people exhibit dishonesty and a propensity for betrayal:

> Yet may your pains six months
> Be quite contrary; and thatch your poor thin roofs
> With burthens of the dead—some that were hang'd—
> No matter; wear them, betray with them: whore still;
> Paint till a horse may mire upon your face.
> A pox of wrinkles! (4.3.145-149)

In Timon's imagination, Timandra and Phrynia will continue in their profession until they are horribly disfigured by their syphilis infections. They will suffer from syphilitic alopecia; but to rectify this, they will devise further deceptions, concealing their baldness with wigs, perhaps made with the hair of those that also betrayed and were hung for it, so

[135] For more on the sexual aspect of Timon's destructive vision, see Nuttall, 104.
[136] Timon is not Shakespeare's only character to wish for poxy destruction by appealing to his enemies' appetites. According to Williams, "Antony adopts a Shakespearean updating of Timon's misanthropy" when he says: "I'll set no gallows or gibbets up/ As I intended once for men to come/ And hang themselves, I'll keep a bawdy house," (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.3.40-42). Williams, *Revolution,* 141.

they can continue whoring, concealing their age and disease behind thick layers of cosmetics.

Timon's lust for destruction reaches a crescendo with his vision of Athens destroyed by pox. He equates syphilitic symptoms with what he views as negative aspects of humanity; the pox is the purge that will wipe these defects clean: "Consumptions sow in hollow bones of man; strike their sharp shins and mar men's spurring" (4.3.152). Timon imagines syphilis growing in the very center or foundation of mankind—within the bones. Its consumptive quality will eat away men's appetites—their spurring being the actions deriving from the pursuit of appetite. Timon then cynically poxes other professions such as lawyers: "Crack the lawyer's voice,/ That he may never more false title plead,/ Nor sound his quillets shrilly (4.3.153-156), and soldiers: "let the unscarr'd braggarts of the war/ Derive some pain from you" (4.3.161-162). Timon fantasizes about the lawyer's false pleading silenced through syphilitic consumption of the vocal cords while the *miles gloriosus*, like Falstaff, earns his veteran's wounds not from Mars but from Venus. The pox will silence those who hypocritically condemn sexual traffic: "Hoar the flamen, that scolds against the quality of flesh, and not believes himself" (4.3.156-158); it will take the nose of those that seek to profit at the commonwealth's expense: "Down with the nose, down with it flat, take the bridge quite away of him that, his particular to foresee, smells from the general weal" (4.3.156-159); it will even "Make curl'd-pated ruffians bald" (4.3.159).

Timon reveals the extent of his plan in the final lines of this diatribe: "Plague all, that your activity may defeat and quell the source of all erection" (4.3.163-165). Timon hopes for nothing short of the complete destruction of Athens. He imagines that syphilis

will not only destroy individuals but the whole city by making everyone impotent—that everyone will be plagued. In a parody of "do unto others," Timon completes the passage with: "There's more gold. Do you damn others, and let this damn you,/ And ditches grave you all!" (4.3.165-167). Timon's closing lines indicate a parodic revision of a passage in the Gospels: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (*The King James Version,* Luke 6:31) and "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (*The King James Version,* Matthew 7:12).[137] Instead of apostolic wisdom, Timon inverts the message to support only the negative outcome of human behavior. Phrynia and Timandra damn themselves and their partners on earth (being burnt by the pox) and from Heaven (by ignoring God's laws). Shakespeare may also be juxtaposing Christian-versus-pagan viewpoints here as well, since Luke 6.30 says, "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away/ thy goods ask them not again." Timon, of course, gave all away, but he expected a reciprocity that was not forthcoming.

Much like Jonson in *Volpone,* Timon is exposing the blasphemous deification of gold.[138] However, he is paradoxically the play's greatest consumer. He is both Athens' most ardent critic and one of her most fallible citizens. Timon reasons that Athens' god is gold, and the worship of gold is corrupt; therefore Athens is corrupt and should be destroyed by a like destroyer. The agent of destruction that Timon seizes upon is the archetypal example of consuming corruption: the pox. Early in the play, the reciprocity between sin and punishment is established in the exchange between Apemantus and the merchant:

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[137] See Nuttall, 115-141.

[138] Jonson parodies the deification of gold by presenting Volpone in *Volpone* (1.1) worshipping his gold.

> *Apemantus*: Traffic confound thee, if the gods will not.
> *Merchant*: If traffic do it, the gods do it.
> *Apemantus*: Traffic's thy god, and thy god confound thee.
> (1.2.237-239)

Apemantus criticizes the merchant as a man who openly pursues exchange as a means of livelihood. He hopes that the merchant's business will confound him. The merchant, with a form of piety, equates fortune with the god's blessing, implying that divine providence guides individual success and failure. With a chiastic sort of logic, Apemantus deliberately displaces the merchant's statement, thus conflating the merchant's gods and traffic to interpret that the merchant's god *is* traffic.

Much later in the play, Timon reaches a similar conclusion when he realizes that the love of gold and the pursuit of appetites are the primary interests of Athenian society—an understanding which leads to a strong sense of disillusionment and betrayal. This is very much apparent when in echoing Apemantus' exchange with the merchant, Timon utters a prayer that concludes with "And gold confound you howsoe'er. Amen" (4.3.442). In his misanthropic speeches, Timon seeks to destroy Athens through her appetites. Timon has realized that Athenian society has deified gold, and he equates the corrosive effect of this god with the pox. This recognition spurs him toward the "horrified recognition that gold makes palatable one 'whom the spittle house and ulcerous sores/ would cast the gorge at'" (4.3.40).[139] Nevertheless, Timon is guilty of embracing the gold standard as much as anyone, even if he sought to create it in his own

[139] Williams, *Revolution,* 140. Incidentally, this is Timon's second mention of the power of gold to transform disfigured, sexually diseased people into objects of adoration. Only a few lines before, Timon says, "This yellow slave/ Will... Make the hoar leprosy adored" (4.3.39). Shakespeare is evoking semantic connotation of syphilis and venereal leprosy with a hoar/whore word-play, for a description of the quibble, see E.A.M. Colman, *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1974), 198.

image: a world in which Timon had "displaced Lady Fortune" and had "become himself, the all-dispensing and nurturing arbiter of good fortunes."[140]

In *The Gift,* Marcel Mauss reached the conclusion that order and prosperity can found in environments of equal opportunity and through the leveling of hierarchical structures:

> People, classes, families and individuals may become rich, but they will not achieve happiness until they can sit down like the knights [of the Round Table] around their common riches. There is no need to seek far for goodness and happiness. It is to be found in the rhythm of communal and private labor, in wealth amassed and redistributed, in the mutual respect and reciprocal generosity that education can impart.[141]

Timon, as a conspicuous spender and consumer, both instigated and perpetuated a gold standard.[142] His excessive gift-giving disallowed reciprocity and fosters what Girard describes as "infinite indebtedness."[143] Perhaps the best example of this is Ventidius from whom Timon refused to accept repayment, but by the time of Timon's need, had learned how not to repay his debts.[144] No one can afford to meet him on equal terms; as a result, he nurtures the development of a social structure which is the antithesis of Mauss' vision of stability: "societies have progressed in the measure in which they, their sub-groups and their members, have been able to stabilize their contracts and to give, receive

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[140] Jowett, *Timon,* 40.
[141] Mauss, 81.
[142] Leinwand points out Timon's propensity for spending throughout the play: "Though he is first a bounteous host and then, apparently, a diametrically opposed type, a misanthrope, wealth (or gold) continues to attach itself to Timon and he continues to do what he can to give it up." Theodore B. Leinwand, *Theater, Finance and Society in Early Modern England (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.
[143] Girard sees irregular borrowing as a gift-giving that instigates "a new form of vassality [...] grounded no longer in strict territorial borders but in vague financial terms. The lack of precise accounting makes indebtedness infinite." Girard, *Theater,* 245.
[144] William O. Scott, "The Paradox of Timon's Self-Cursing," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35:3 (1984), 295.

and repay."[145] Instead of equality in gift-giving, Timon's giving bankrupts others' ability to reciprocate; as a result, he helps make the environment of inequality and sycophancy that is his undoing.

Differing visions of the etiquette of exchange are at the root of Timon's tragic misanthropy and a key to understanding Timon's pockified language. In Mauss' assessment of gift theory in early Hindi literature, he finds that:

> the authors of the Codes and Epics spread themselves as only Hindu authors can on the theme that gifts, donors and things given are to be considered in their context, precisely and scrupulously, so that there may be no mistake about the manner of giving and receiving to fit each particular occasion.[146]

It might be said that Timon's flaw lies in his fundamental misunderstanding of the social exchange/interchange of gift theory. More precisely, his idea of gift-giving and patronage is at odds with that of Athenian society. Timon's liberality/prodigality does not conform to the Athenian social standards of the play; as a result, bounty is unproductive and sterile (see Fig. 12). In the *Mahabharata,* Hindu theologians recognized this very conundrum: "The wise man eating food gives it rebirth, and in its turn, food gives him rebirth."[147] Food is the most fundamental of gifts, and Mauss interprets the *Mahabharata* as saying that the gift, especially of food, "given brings return in this life and in the other."[148] However, Timon is not a wise man; neither his food nor his gifts provide growth, rebirth or regeneration, a fact that is most apparent in the banquet scene in 3.6 when he repays his sterile friends with the equally sterile dishes of warm water. His grace/invocation before the feast is a negation of the Athenian social

[145] Mauss, 80.
[146] Mauss, 58.
[147] *Anucasanaparvan,* Book XIII of the *Mahabharata*, 5863, quoted in Mauss, 124.
[148] Mauss, 54.

framework: "For these my/ present friends, as they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them,/ and to nothing they are welcome" (3.6.69-71), and this negation will find further expression in Timon's poxy apocalyptic vision in the following act.

Timon's excessive gift-giving has excluded rather than included him from the social fabric. He has given of his body-estate foolishly, and his unproductive prodigality has not fostered growth or rebirth, but rather, his own equally sterile misanthropy. At the beginning of his play, he believes in an archaic form of hospitality, in which exchange is "not the same as a market where a man takes a thing objectively for a price."[149] However, the other Athenians do take note of prices and values, and they are out for profit and the pursuit of what Williams describes as a "domestic El Dorado in their new-style acquisitive society."[150] Jowett sees Timon's liberality as a condition, which "conforms to the munificence of a pre-capitalist society in which patronage plays a central role."[151] Whereas Timon sees gift-giving as part of what might then be considered a more traditional social framework, his friends differentiate between gifts as gifts and debts as debts. Rather than gift-giving and patronage, they more closely reflect an early modern image of emerging capitalism, such as the senators who, for example, deny Timon's plea for financial succor "in a joint and corporate voice" (2.2.196).[152]

Timon's realization of the asymmetric nature of his gift-giving instigates his turn to misanthropy, rage and the pox. As a result, he attempts to give another gift to Athens in the form of the pox. Timon's offended sense of hospitality is echoed in archaic

[149] Mauss, 58.
[150] Williams, *Revolution,* 143.
[151] Jowett, *Timon,* 32.
[152] According to the *OED,* this is the first example of the use of corporate to mean "belonging to a body politic, or corporation, or to a body of persons," the definition which is the basis for describing a business entity.

literature. The deleterious effects of an improper gift-giving etiquette are recorded by Anna, food deified,

> Him who, without giving me to the gods or the
> spirits, or to his servants or guests,
> prepares and eats [me], and in
> his folly thus eats poison, I eat him,
> I am his death.[153]

Rubinstein sees a similar act of appetite, or sating appetites, turning cannibalistic in *Troilus and Cressida*: "in line with believing 'lechery eats itself,' he [Thersites] would naturally see its punishment as the consuming sexual disease that eats the lecher."[154] This idea is more fully developed in *Timon of Athens*. Rather than generous Timon, this injunction seems initially more appropriate for the miserly, super-acquisitive Volpone who "exemplifies the accumulation of wealth as surely as Timon exemplifies its loss."[155] However, the passage from the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* suggests that there is an implicit form and function to hospitality as well, and the bounty of nature and hospitality can turn into folly and poison, just as Timon's largesse is transformed into misanthropy and the pox.

As I have discussed in the first pages of the chapter, Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* introduces the image of Madame Troynovant, the great grandmother of corporations. Timon might be viewed as the culmination of the moral-economic-social sickness that Nashe identified more than fifteen years before. Lorna Hutson finds the root of Pierce's economic discontent in the well-established tradition dating from the "early to mid years of Elizabeth's reign" when:

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[153] *Baudhayana Dharmasutra,* 11.6.41-42, quoted in Mauss, 56.
[154] Rubinstein, 73.
[155] Jowett, *Timon,* 7.

> The high displeasure of Almighty God and the imminent decay of the poor of this realm could be invoked with conviction as the likely consequence of tolerating parasites who ate meat throughout Lent, or attired themselves in "monstrous" hose made by the imported silks and velvets, or turned a blind eye to "deceits" and "abuses" in English manufacture.[156]

As Hutson explains, this tradition had become perverted as it was paradoxically harnessed to justify the generation of wealth for a few individuals.[157] In *Pierce,* predatory individuals—monopolists and informers—make Madame Troynovant. In *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare, borrowing from the substantial pockified literary tradition created by the verse satirists and Wits, creates the same sort of environment, and uses the pox from a similar perspective. What Shakespeare has developed, however, is the ability to describe in pockified terms the philosophical affliction of a society that is dominated by money. For Nashe, hypocrisy and hidden sin are poxed; for Shakespeare, hypocrisy and hidden sin pox, at least in the psycho-linguistic form of Timon's discontent.

In Sontag's analysis of Elizabethan disease metaphors, she found that "Disease imagery is used to express concern for social order."[158] Critics such as Schoenfeldt and Harris who have discussed syphilis in terms of the commonwealth and body politic supported her perception. However, in the early Jacobean period, Shakespeare has mutated the traditional Elizabethan conception of the pox metaphor. Shakespeare pits a possibly corrupt Timon against a probably corrupt Athenian society. In this conflict of

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[156] Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 181.
[157] By the time that Nashe was writing *Pierce,* the "morally justified economic controls" which were once invoked to support a faltering economy became "redundant and even oppressive. Their chief justification now was the lucrative incomes they afforded to those who gained the right to the fines they yielded. Informers, monopolists and "almost the entire publishing industry" which "was dependant on the production of discourse against the abuses of excess and intemperance," profited against the fashion to decry "enormities." Hutson, *Nashe,* 181, 189. For more on Elizabethan governmental corruption see John Guy, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8-9.
[158] Sontag, "Illness as Metaphor," 73.

economic systems, Timon finds himself disappointed, jaded, and misanthropic. Rubinstein, much like Sontag, finds that the pox makes "a positive contribution to the atmosphere of moral erosion that provides its context in Shakespeare's plays."[159] But in *Timon of Athens,* the pox is not an indicator of moral erosion; instead, like greed and gold, it works general ruin.[160] As a result, Shakespeare imbued Timon with a pockified voice with which he attempts to infect Athens with a consumption that does not describe but mirrors and scourges rampant Athenian consumption. In this context, syphilis retains its association as a disease of the appetite. Rather than supporting a sexual-social moralizing theme, Shakespeare focuses on the pox as a referent in his examination of the consuming properties of gold and acquisitive socio-economic environments. Timon's pox, like his dreams of Athenian destruction, remains within the realm of metaphor. Timon's pox and destruction are linguistic enterprises. His ardent wish that Athens should descend into a poxy apocalypse is as sterile as his gift giving. By the end of the play Timon's pockified voice and prodigious misanthropy, like his twice-prodigious wealth, has expended itself, leaving Timon only able to "tolerate the economy of death."[161]

[159] Rubinstein, 74.
[160] Scott, 297.
[161] Leinwand, 37.

Conclusion

"Being Taught with our Own Harme:" Lessons Learned from the Pox Metaphor[1]

> The problem of my life is that I've always confused what I saw with what I wanted to see."[2]

Umberto Eco is a writer whose primary concern is the mutability of language and the effect that language, specifically in the form of stories, can have on peoples' lives. *Foccault's Pendulum* and *Baudolino* address the theme of the out-of-control story. In the two novels, the Grail and Prester John legends infect imaginations and take on a life of their own with tragic results. Baudolino—a speaker of many languages, a teller of tales and a pacifist—realizes, in hindsight, the dangers that legends, story-telling and imagination pose when they are combined with the pursuit of power: "there's nothing better than imagining other worlds [...] to forget the painful one we live in. At least so I thought then. I hadn't yet realized that, imagining other worlds, you end up changing this one."[3] Baudolino's Prester John tales, innocently made for his amusement and later as propaganda for the Holy Roman Empire, became an excuse for violence and destruction: ends which were far removed from his original intentions.

In this respect, Baudolino is like Harold Pinter's Lenny for whom both violence and the pox are defined more by words than concrete actualities. Lenny realizes the power of language; he is able to create a pox infection in his encounter with the woman

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[1] Ulrich Von Hutten, *De Morbo Gallico,* Trans. Thomas Bertheletti (London, 1533), G4[r], EEBO, internet, 17 June 2004.
[2] Umberto Eco, *Baudolino,* trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 2002), 30.
[3] Eco, 99.

by merely imagining it and giving voice to his imagination—his act of speech makes the pox. The climax of *Homecoming* is Sam's confession that Max's wife, Jessie, committed adultery with his friend Mac. Sam makes his admission and then appears to fall dead:

> *Max* (pointing at Sam). You know what that
> man had?
> *Lenny*. Has.
> *Max*. Has. A diseased imagination.[4]

Sam is not dead but only unconscious, and his admission of his deceased sister-in-law's infidelity appears to be a rare, honest utterance. Lenny's rhetorical violence and his ability to pox through language set the tone for the play. All the characters, with perhaps the exception of Sam, are untrustworthy; their motives are unclear, and their communications are contradictory. Yet Lenny successfully attributes to Sam a diseased imagination in the same linguistic manner that he infected the women in Act I with the pox. One might suspect that Sam's uncomfortable truth has invaded the rest of the families' fictions and is therefore marginalized as a diseased or false admission.

In both Eco and Pinter's works, stories make history and words create reality. Lenny's syphilitic language may be Pinter's tribute to Shakespeare's use of the pox metaphor. In Shakespeare's writings, syphilis-inspired language escapes the bonds of physical, pathogenic actualities to become a linguistic infection that inscribes ideas, ideologies and psyches. This final complex image of the pox metaphor is defined by the speech act, which is the "social, interpersonal, executive power of language, the pragmatic 'doing things with words.'" [5] In the context of the pox metaphor, the speech act is the linguistic transmission of the pox, or poxy-metaphorical ravages. While postmodern authors and literary theorists appreciate the conception of making reality

[4] Harold Pinter, *The Homecoming* (London: Samuel French, 1965), 42.
[5] Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre,* (1980; London: Routledge, 2002), 145.

through speech acts, they are following in the footsteps of Shakespeare who had, by the early seventeenth century, begun to realize the infectious power of language—a power that was realized in the pox metaphor.

Timothy Hampton describes the process in which words make rather than record reality as "remotivation."[6] Hampton explains that remotivation: "reverses the relationship between words and things, between language and reality. Figures—that is, metaphors, metonymies and similes—no longer merely ornament language as 'flowers of speech.' Tropes here produce history itself."[7] Hampton recognizes Rabelaisian remotive processes in relation to the pox metaphor in "Rabelais' version of the world-historical encounter between the European Panurge and the great civilization to the east" in *Pantagruel*:

> For the proto-Orientalist Panurge the Turk becomes his label—a dog, a lusty sleeper in the straw, a devil worshipper. Tropological naming functions both *rhetorically,* to freeze or capture the other figural language, and *ideologically,* to produce a particular culturally constructed notion of the Turks.[8]

Panurge describes his Turkish captors by the common epithet, Turkish dog. He argues that the epithet—the naming of Turks as dogs—results in a Circean transformation when Panurge finds himself fleeing the city wrapped in bacon and pursued by a pack of barking, Turkish dogs. Syphilis enters into this trope-cum-history when Panurge, in his escape from the Turks, claims that he was "cured by the fire of his sciatica, a common symptom of syphilis."[9] Early modern medical convention held that the pox was a cold,

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[6] Timothy Hampton, "'Turkish Dogs:' Rabelais, Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Alterity," *Representations* 41 (1993), 67.
[7] Hampton, 67.
[8] Hampton, 67-68.
[9] Hampton, 66.

damp disease. In order to balance the humors, most treatments included a regimen of sweating. Medical practitioners attempted to raise the patient's temperature in an attempt to sweat out the contagion.[10] Thus, Panurge's physical burning corrected his conceptually moist affliction.[11]

Etiological disjunctions such as this appear in the history of the pox metaphor even earlier, albeit in simple or flawed forms such as John Fisher's conceptualization of sin as poxy corruption, or Fracastoro's contradictory pox origin myths in *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus*. However, remotivation of the pox metaphor does not flourish until the 1590s with the conflation of consumption and corruption. Jonathan Gil Harris has recently argued in relation to:

> Syphilis, a disease attributed by Shakespeare's contemporaries variously to appetitive immoderation and to contact with infectious foreign bodies, offered the playwright a ready-made vocabulary with which to mediate the disjunctions of a commerce that draws one "oft from home." The play's references to the disease serve to condense disparate anxieties about unchecked individual appetite and potentially deleterious physical effects of trade with foreign nations—anxieties, in other words, about both moral and systemic economies.[12]

The pox-derived, economic vocabulary that Harris identified was the result of what I have described as the conflation of consumption and corruption. Harris attributed poxy economic dialectic to an existing vocabulary; however, having traced the metaphor across the sixteenth century, I have argued that the developing pox metaphor enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with emerging concerns about, not just economic factors, but the

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[10] For more about syphilis' cold, moist nature, refer to 66.

[11] In the case of remotivation in Panurge's pox is a case of splitting hairs. Galenic medical conceptions were viewed as fact. As a result, Rabelais jokes about Panurge burning his pox out, but sweating treatments involved raising the patients' temperatures in order to sweat the cold, moist, corrupting humors out.

[12] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 30-31.

many modes of consumption which were changing during the period. This is not to say that writers of the 1590s, who began to remotivate the metaphor, through the conflation of consumption and corruption, did not already have an arsenal of pox words at their disposal. It is likely that the Wits and the verse satirists were raised upon a literary diet of Erasmus' pockified *Colloquies* as well as having some knowledge of Rabelais' poxy prose and the early Tudor pox tradition. The Wits and verse satirists begin to apply the pox metaphor to corrupt systems—to sexuality, economy, print and fashion with remotive effects; as a result, Rabelais' texts or Nashe's French author, Poco, become infectious, corrupting, pockified influences, while lecherous people are not described so much as a threat to their fellow sinners but as infections of the commonwealth, like Marston's Tubrio or Falstaff.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the pox achieves complete etiological disjunction—syphilis begins to appear in tropes that transcend the body and body-centered epistemology. Syphilis appears as a linguistic or psychological attribute associated with misanthropy. In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens,* the pox has become an ideological rather than pathogenic infection, invoked through language. Now, language and the psyche have the power to pox. This process begins in earnest with *Troilus* when Shakespeare dramatizes Pandarus' poxy corruption and Thersites poxed railing. Pandarus' pox, though foreshadowed by his phthisic and his lecherous lifestyle, does not become syphilis until he suffers rejection and disillusionment. Furthermore, Pandarus' attempt to pox his audience is not only an infection via language—his poxy, misanthropic bequest—but it is also transcends time and place, traveling through from ancient Troy to Troynovant—Elizabethan London.

The etiological disjunction, represented by Pandarus' poxy sins, reappears in *Timon* as linguistic pox. While Timon's pox curse is seemingly ineffective against the Athenians, he effectively inscribes the pox upon himself. As a profligate, Timon's language is pox-free, but after he becomes a misanthrope, his language and his psyche are transformed by pockified images of corrupt consumption—even though disillusionment alone has infected him, rather than, any evidence of an actual syphilitic infection.

Shakespeare's application of the pox in a completely ideological sense—his removal of the pox metaphor into the realm of the psychological—is the direct result of changing perception of both language and economy. There is no evidence of syphilis outside of Timon's words and his association of this consumptive disease with the Athenian consumption of gold. In *Timon* disease exists only in his (and to a lesser extent, Apemantus') language: "There is no leprosy, but what thou speak'st" (4.3.358). Timon enjoins Timandra and Phrynia to pox Athens, without any indication that they are syphilitic. Poxy ideas become self-contained pox paradigms regardless of, and removed from, the physical incidence of disease. In *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon,* the pox represents what has become the dominant trope for a discontent vocalized by misanthropic speakers who are profoundly disillusioned by the appetitive frenzy of the world around them.

Late Elizabethan and early Jacobean satire has long been associated with economic influences. As early as 1952, Hallet Smith credited the formation of Elizabethan satire's form to "social and economic forces" rather than "literary or philosophical" influences.[13] *Timon,* like *Troilus,* is of course very much a commentary

[13] Hallet Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry* (1952; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 194. Similarly, Herek argues that Donne concludes "Satyre III" by "pondering London's commercial

on the economic state of Shakespeare's London. However, in *Timon* and *Troilus,* Shakespeare takes the poxy economic discussion one step further. As David Hawkes has argued, in the late Elizabethan age the signifier of economic value becomes separated from its object, which was gold; as a result value becomes autonomous:

> For most literate Englishmen, the autonomy of value was one manifestation of the same tendency that could be observed in religious idolatry and carnal sensuality in all its forms. It is this totalizing perspective that allows the thinkers of the early modern period an insight into the spiritual and ethical implications of commodity fetishism that has largely been lost to our own epoch.[14]

This is to say that during Shakespeare's life, value or worth becomes extrinsic—based on external factors such as demand—rather than intrinsic, a far more static standard that had translated into the rather stable equation in which value equals gold. The autonomy of economic value allows for the reinterpretation of social, moral and religious evaluations. Hawkes describes this concept in his interpretation of Marc Shell's *Money, Language and Thought*:

> Economic and linguistic theory, have historically developed in lockstep, moving away from intrinsic and toward nominal modes of evaluation [...] The history of representation [...] is characterized by the progressive independence of signs—whether words, money or visual images—from things.[15]

Hawkes' linkage of the "progressive independence of signs" of "words, money or visual images" is particularly important to the pox metaphor in works such as *Troilus* and *Timon.* The autonomy, which Hawkes identified, allowed Shakespeare and his

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growth and recognizing that opportunities for commercial growth often transform into opportunities for corruption." Bryan Thomas Herek, "Donne's Satyre III," *The Explicator* 60.4 (2002) 194.

[14] David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 22.

[15] Hawkes, 20.

contemporaries a new freedom of expression which they used to remove syphilis' destructive qualities from discussions relating to the body and apply this mode of description to the consumptive qualities of their social and economic environment.

The speech act of remotivation which represents the pinnacle of the pox metaphor is therefore directly connected to the early modern commentary on consumption and corruption. If early modern writers were compelled toward remotivation by observing their changing economic world, the pox itself could only become part of this process when poxy tropes or metaphors attained great and wide-ranging cultural significance: when the import and implications of the disease began to describe far more than a medical condition. The early modern body-centered episteme was a primary factor in the remotivation of the pox metaphor. Since early moderns conceptualized in terms of the body, the pox was applied to religious, political and economic value-oriented discussions that were far removed from corporeal bodies and physical instances of the disease. Furthermore, early modern associations with syphilis as a morally-loaded disease—because of its venereal nature and as the inheritor of biblical leprosy's embodiment of sin pathologized—made it the disease of choice for describing corrupt systems. As the disease of appetite—more so than plague and leprosy—syphilis comes through the process of remotivation as the paradigm of corrupt consumption.

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